

An Ironside Expository Commentary

1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS



H. A. IRONSIDE

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PART 1

1 CORINTHIANS

PREFACE

For nearly two years, 1934 and 1935, it was my privilege to attempt to expound the Corinthian epistles at the regular Sunday morning gatherings, numbering from twenty-five hundred to thirty-five hundred people, in the auditorium of the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. With radio equipment these addresses were broadcast over a large stretch of territory, thus reaching many thousands more. So insistent has been the demand for their publication in printed form that I have decided to send them out in this way. The original messages were taken down by a competent reporter and have been considerably revised and shortened, as otherwise it would have taken several volumes to reproduce them. I am more firmly convinced than ever that there is need to emphasize the fundamental principles set forth in these letters given by inspiration through the apostle to the Gentiles, in order that Christians generally may be called back to the simplicity of early days. In 1 Corinthians we have the order that should prevail in Christian assemblies, while the second epistle deals more particularly with the ministry of the church. If it please God, the addresses on that letter will be published later.

I hope my readers will not come to this book looking for a critical analysis of the epistle. If so, they will be disappointed. The object I had in view was to expound the Word as simply as possible for the edification and instruction of plain people who have neither the time nor the learning to follow heavy and

erudite comments. If any such are helped to a greater appreciation of the value of this portion of the Word of God I shall be abundantly repaid for the time and labor required to reproduce the spoken messages.

—H. A. IRONSIDE

LECTURE 1

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST JESUS

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (vv. 1-3)

The two letters to the Corinthians, the letter to the Romans, and that to the Galatians form a quartet of epistles which were apparently written during Paul's third missionary journey and bear a very intimate relationship each to the other. In Romans we have set forth the great fundamental doctrine of justification by faith alone. In Galatians that doctrine is defended after having been called in question by legal teachers. These two epistles, Romans and Galatians, form therefore the very foundation of Christian teaching. Then in the two letters to the Corinthians we have instruction as to the church. In the first epistle we have the ordering, the calling, and the discipline of the church. In the second we have the ministry of the church. If we should lose all the rest of the New

Testament—which God forbid we should—and have only these four letters preserved, they would be sufficient to show us the way of salvation and how to conduct ourselves as Christian people coming together in a church relationship. Therefore, we can get some idea of the importance of being thoroughly familiar with them.

How the gospel reached Corinth we learn from Acts 18, where we are told that the apostle Paul after his visit to Athens passed on to Corinth and at first began the work in a very quiet way. He did not enter the city with any blare of trumpets; he was not advertised as a great evangelist or Bible teacher, but he simply went in quietly as an unknown craftsman. He was a tentmaker, and in association with two friends of his, Aquila and Priscilla, who were engaged in the same business, an establishment was opened up where they wrought, we are told, night and day. We learn elsewhere that in this way the apostle was able to support not only himself but all who labored with him when the churches forgot their responsibility to them. He was a great foreign missionary and when the churches of God did recognize their responsibility and sent gifts, as in the case of the Philippian church, he gladly received them and used the money for the glory of God. But if he were neglected, he did not sit down and pine and whimper because of the coldheartedness of Christians elsewhere, but simply created a job for himself and went to work making tents and providing the wherewithal to carry on his testimony. This in a way was a real help, for sometimes a preacher or a missionary goes into a field where he is looked upon as a well-supported individual bearing an official title and relationship to the church, and the people often are not as interested in him and his message as if he came among them working with his own hands as they have to do.

Having established his business the apostle began to move among the Jews. There was a synagogue in the city, which he attended and where he doubtless listened to the regular services, and then when opportunity was given, he presented the gospel there. There was a great deal of freedom in a Jewish synagogue. Jewish visitors, particularly if attired in the teacher's garb, were permitted to take part in the service. Undoubtedly when Paul went there he wore the garments that showed that he was a graduate of the school of Gamaliel and therefore he was recognized as a teacher. On one occasion as he and Barnabas sat in a synagogue, the rulers, having completed the first part of the service, recognized these two men as teachers and said, "Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on" (Acts 13:15). And we read, "Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience" (Acts 13:16). This would be the customary procedure in the Jewish

synagogue. There was nothing irregular and nothing disorderly about it. Paul was simply availing himself of a privilege. So from Sabbath to Sabbath, that is, on Saturday of course, he reasoned with the Jews and any Gentiles who might be present. It was a common thing for inquiring Gentiles to attend the Jewish services. Tired and weary of the customary recurring heathen festivities, finding nothing in paganism to answer the yearning desires of their hearts, they sought there what they could not find elsewhere. When they in a measure at least accepted the Jewish doctrines, they were recognized as "Proselytes of the Gate." To these people the apostle presented the message; he reasoned with them on the Sabbath Day.

Some of our present-day legalistic friends who have never known the blessedness of deliverance from law say, "We read in the book of Acts that Paul preached on the Sabbath Day, and that day is Saturday and so we are in duty bound to recognize that day rather than Sunday as the Lord's Day." The fact is that the apostle was simply accommodating himself to the Jews who met on their Sabbath. If he wished to reach them, he had to reach them on that day. The Christians themselves met together on the first day of the week to break bread and for prayer. The earliest Christian testimony along that line confirms that very thing. One of those early writers says, "On the first day of the week, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, the day which we Christians call the Lord's Day, we come together for worship, etc." This was the custom of Christians from the beginning, but on the Jewish Sabbath they found opportunity to minister to the Jews, and so used that day for that purpose. We learn that Paul at first simply dealt with them from the standpoint of the Old Testament, but "when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:5). His work up to this time was preparation, but now, with the backing of other helpers, he felt the time had come to give a clear ringing testimony, to show that all these Old Testament Scriptures pointed to the One who had been crucified at Jerusalem, had been raised from the dead, and ascended into heaven. And now many of the Jews turned from them, they opposed the message, and the apostle did a very significant thing. He wore the long eastern robes, and he shook his garments and said, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6). And so he left the synagogue, never to enter it again as far as this particular city was concerned. He found a preaching place in the house of a man named Justus.

Justus was evidently a Gentile, but one who was a proselyte; he had accepted the Jewish revelation as to God, and his house adjoined the synagogue. Paul

began preaching in his house, and one of the first converts was the chief ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, who believed with all his house; and the work went on for a year and a half, and many of the Corinthians having heard the Word believed and were baptized.

Notice the order. They heard the message, they believed the gospel, and then they were publicly baptized, thus confessing that they had received the crucified One as their own personal Savior. I emphasize that because some people imagine that in his epistles the apostle seems to minimize the importance of Christian baptism. He did not ordinarily do the baptizing himself, but he was always insistent to see that it was done. The fact that Paul himself was generally not the baptizer does not indicate that he slighted the Christian ordinance of baptism.

As we go on in that eighteenth chapter of Acts we read of the insurrection stirred up against Paul in the days of Gallio, and we are told that the Greeks caught Sosthenes, who had become the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him for his attempt to foment a riot. It would seem that the beating did him good because we next find his name linked with the apostle Paul in Corinthians as a Christian. Of course we have no positive proof that this is the same man, but I take it for granted that it is. It brought him at last to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior.

A mighty work of God was accomplished during the year and a half that Paul was in Corinth. It was not a likely field for missionary service; it was one of the metropolises of the ancient world. Its population numbered at this time between six and seven hundred thousand people and it was given over to the worship of the goddess Aphrodite, the Greek name for the one whom the Romans worshipped as Venus, the goddess of lust, or carnal love, and in celebrating the rites of Aphrodite, the Corinthians gave themselves up to the most shameful licentiousness. So notorious was this that, in all parts of the Greek-speaking world, if men or women were found behaving in an unclean way, the worst that anybody could say of them was that they acted like Corinthians. Just as, for instance, the names of those two cities of the plains have come down to our day, linked with such wickedness that if one says of a person, "He is like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah," you at once understand that he lives a life of vilest uncleanness. So to say one behaved like a Corinthian, or was Corinthianized, intimated that he was a man totally lost to all sense of morality or decency. Such was the city into which Paul went to preach the gospel of the grace of God, and in this city that gospel won many to the knowledge of Christ. It was the means of delivering people from their lives of wickedness, of making saints out of those who had been vicious and utterly lost to all sense of decency.

When we have this background before us, what interest it gives to these opening verses, “Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.” I leave out the italicized words, “to be,” because I want to convey to you the fact that they should be left out in the second verse also. Paul was not called *to be* an apostle, he *was* an apostle, but he was a *called* apostle, an apostle by divine call. And so you and I are not called *to be* saints, if we have trusted the Lord Jesus; we *are* saints, we are saints by calling. Notice then that Paul’s apostleship, as he tells us in the letter to the Galatians, was not of man, neither by man. No one had anything to do with putting him into the apostolate except the risen Lord. An apostle was one who had seen the Lord and went forth to proclaim His message. Paul, as Saul, saw the Lord that day on the Damascus turnpike and went forth to proclaim Christ to the Jews and Gentiles. It was the will of God that made him what he was.

Notice how he links with himself, “Sosthenes our brother.” I take it for granted that this must have been the Corinthian Sosthenes, because those receiving the letter would at once recognize his name, and a thrill would go through their hearts as they exclaimed, “Yes, Sosthenes, once the persecutor, converted here in our own city, is still with the apostle Paul, and is sending his greetings to us.” We value the greetings of those we love and esteem in the Lord, and when they go elsewhere we are always pleased to hear from them, and so the Corinthians would get a special thrill of pleasure as they found his name linked with that of the apostle Paul.

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth.” What a change had taken place since the years when this very man as Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church of God and wasted it. There is a strange teaching going around today that the church of the book of Acts is not the church of our day, that the church, the body of Christ, did not begin until after Paul was put in prison in Rome. Paul persecuted the church of God when still unconverted. How could he have persecuted that which had not existence? The church had its birthday on the day of Pentecost, and after that, churches of God were established in local communities. Here it was one composed of those who were once legalistic Jews or blind Gentiles, but now all one in Christ Jesus. And the apostle speaks of them as, “the sanctified.” “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called . . . saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” Our idea of a saint or a sanctified one is often a sinless person. We see someone in whom the grace of God shines out most wonderfully and we say, “Well, certainly there is a saint.” Or, perhaps someone has just gone home, and we speak of “the sainted So-and-so,”

because they have gotten beyond the reach of sin. But that is not the way Scripture uses these terms. “The sanctified,” not the sinless; “saints,” not those absolutely holy. The saints are the separated, the sanctified are those set apart to God in Christ Jesus. These are two words that come from the same root, meaning separated, set apart, devoted to a holy purpose. Are you saved, have you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? The moment you did so God separated you from a world under judgment and set you apart unto Himself in Christ Jesus, and that instant you became a saint, that moment you were sanctified, and that sanctification is a perfect one.

We read in Hebrews, “He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” I used to be taught, and perhaps some of you have been told, that a man has first to be justified, and then perhaps sometime afterward he goes on to receive what they call the second blessing and he becomes sanctified. When I turn to the Book of God, I find the very opposite. I find that in the first place a man is sanctified by the work of the Spirit in his heart even before he comes to the knowledge of Christ. It is the sanctifying, separating work of the Spirit of God that leads him to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the moment he puts his faith in Christ, that moment God sees him as sanctified in Christ Jesus, set apart to God from the old life, the old ways, the world, that to which he once belonged, set apart to God and counted clean in His sight because of the infinite value of the atoning work of His beloved Son. Have you trusted Christ? Are you sanctified? Do you say to me, “I would hardly dare say that. I know I am a Christian, I trust I am justified, but I am afraid I am not good enough yet to say that I am sanctified.” Just as your goodness had nothing to do with your justification, so it is not your goodness that entitles you to take your place among the sanctified. You were justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and all the past put away forever, and God gave you a new standing before Him. But sin makes men not only guilty but unclean. Because we are guilty we need to be justified, because we are unclean we need to be sanctified. But we are cleansed by the blessed atoning blood through which we are justified. So we read of being sanctified by the blood of His covenant. “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). The moment He rose from the dead God saw all believers as linked with Him. In Hebrews we read, “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11). So if you are a Christian and have any doubt about your sanctification, put it away and thank God that you are in Christ and therefore sanctified.

As we go on in this epistle we find the apostle had to bring a great many things before these Corinthians that needed correction. He told them that they were carnal, going to law with one another, tolerating all kinds of unholy things in their midst. Some had wrong ideas about the marriage relationship, some were very ignorant about their relation to their past idolatry, but the apostle speaks of them all as the sanctified in Christ Jesus. But observe, he not only addresses this letter to, "The church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called . . . saints," but widens out the address so that it takes in every Christian to the end of the dispensation, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Do you see the importance of that? There are many things in this epistle that some Christians today try to dodge and get away from, and very often you will hear, as the epistle is read, "Oh, well, that was for that age and that day, or for folks living in Corinth, but not for people today." Now notice the address is, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." This letter then is addressed to each one who seeks to own the Lordship of Christ; and therefore, as we study it, I trust we will accept it as a personal message from the Holy Spirit of God to each one of us as Christian individuals.

We would not like to think that the great grace passages in this epistle were only for the Corinthians. Let us not then attempt to put the responsibility passages upon the people of Corinth alone, but remember that all is written for the whole church of God, clear down to the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto Him. In the third verse we have the apostolic salutation, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." We are saved by grace, but of course this is not the grace to which he here refers. He knows that is settled, these people who are sanctified in Christ Jesus are already justified by faith, saved by grace. It is not that which he is thinking of when he says, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And then again all Christians have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we *have* peace with God"—it is a settled thing—"through our Lord Jesus Christ" (emphasis added). He is not praying that these Christians may obtain that grace of which he speaks here. First of all, it is grace to sustain in all the trials of the way, grace to enable us to overcome in every hour of temptation. In Hebrews we are bidden to "come boldly unto the throne of grace"—upon which our great High Priest sits—"that we may obtain mercy, and find grace [for seasonable] help" (Heb. 4:16). We need grace every day of our lives.

The grace of yesterday will not suffice for today. We need to go to God morning by morning, to draw down from above by meditation and prayer supplies of grace to start the day aright. But throughout the day we need to learn to “pray without ceasing” that our hearts may continually be reaching out to Him that new supplies of grace may come down to us constantly. We cannot keep ourselves, not for one moment, therefore the need of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the peace, I repeat, is not peace *with* God, but that peace *of* God of which we read in Philippians 4:6–7: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” You see this has nothing to do with the sin question. That is settled.

We have peace with God because our sins have been forever put away, but this has to do with the question of things that would keep us anxious, the trials of life that press upon our hearts. How blessed the privilege to go to God about them all. I am afraid many dear Christians miss a great deal here because they have never learned to go to Him about their temporal affairs as well as their spiritual needs. Christians have looked at me aghast when I have told them of praying about money and regarding family affairs. They say, “You do not mean to say that God who created the world is concerned that I have money to meet my rent and to pay for food, that He will interfere in my family affairs?” “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing”—that is all-inclusive—“by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” My brother, my sister, not a trial ever comes to you, there is not a perplexity you are called upon to face, there is not a need you will have to meet, but God invites you to come to Him about it, and you have the promise, “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

LECTURE 2

THE FELLOWSHIP OF GOD'S SON

1 Corinthians 1:4–9

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (vv. 4–9)

Even as we read these words we cannot but notice how frequently the full name and title of our Savior is used, and throughout this entire epistle we shall find this is characteristic. He who brought these Corinthians out of darkness into His marvelous light is He who through grace has brought many of us to a saving knowledge of Himself. He is our Lord Jesus Christ. You will never find in the Bible that undue familiarity in the use of divine names which is so common in the irreverent days in which we live. No one, for instance, in the Scriptures ever addresses our blessed Savior merely as Jesus. He is sometimes

spoken of as Jesus, and by divine inspiration, when His atoning work is particularly in view, for the angel said, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). But when He is addressed directly, and ordinarily even when spoken of by His followers, He is called, "the Lord Jesus," "the Lord Jesus Christ," or "Jesus Christ our Lord." I am sure there is something in that for each one of us. He has said, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am" (John 13:13). Let us ever remember when we approach Him in prayer that He is our Lord; when we speak of Him to others, that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). These epistles to the Corinthians emphasize His Lordship throughout. Let us beware of calling Jesus, Lord, and then slighting His commands.

If He is not Lord of all,
Then He is not Lord at all.

Thank God, we delight to know Him as our supreme sovereign Master.

In this introductory portion, the apostle who points out in other parts of the epistle a great many irregularities in the church at Corinth, who reproves these believers for many things bringing dishonor upon the name of the Lord, yet first of all gives God thanks for what His grace has already wrought. As he remembers the year and a half that he labored in Corinth, during which time the greater part of those primarily addressed in this letter were brought into a saving knowledge of Christ, he says, "I thank my God always on your behalf." As a soul-winner it brought great joy to his heart to think of those he had the privilege of pointing to Christ. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." And when he speaks thus, he is not thinking for the moment merely of the grace that saves. They were saved by grace; no one is saved in any other way, and grace is God's free unmerited favor toward those deserving the very opposite. But having been saved we are dowered by grace; God provides through His grace all we need for our journey through this world. Among other things, when He gathers people together in church fellowship, and it is according to the mind of God that believers should be gathered together in various localities as churches of God, the Lord makes Himself responsible through the same grace that saves to minister that which will profit and edify and build them up as companies of believers. It is this particularly on which the apostle is here dwelling.

He thanks God for the grace of God given him by Jesus Christ, "that in every thing," he says, "ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge."

In other words, this Corinthian church was one greatly blessed, from the standpoint of gifts of the Spirit. There were those among them who could minister the Word of God most acceptably, there were others who had the gift of the evangelist who could go out and carry the message to the world, there were some who were gifted as teachers, who could impart spiritual instruction to their brethren; there were many who had miraculous gifts (chap. 12). It is a question if there ever was a Christian church more richly blessed from this standpoint than the Corinthian church, and yet it is a solemn fact that they were very carnal, although so wonderfully endowed. That leads us to realize that gifts in themselves are not preservative. One may be very gifted, one may have great ability individually, and yet not necessarily be walking with God, not necessarily guided by the Holy Spirit in the use of His gift. A church may be blessed with many in its fellowship upon whom God has bestowed special gifts of the Spirit, but these do not themselves prove that that church is spiritual above others. We live in a day when there is a very unhealthy craving for what we may call "the miraculous gifts," and people have an idea that if these were more in evidence in the church there would be more spirituality and more accomplished for God. I think the history of the Corinthian church proves the unsoundness of such reasoning. No church that I know of has ever exceeded them in the grace of God in regard to gifts, and yet they were anything but a truly spiritual church. In the epistle to the Ephesians a very similar expression is used to what we have in Corinthians: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (4:7). And then he mentions the different gifts that the ascended Christ has given to the church.

It is grace on God's part that leads the Holy Spirit to bestow these gifts upon His people. How much we need to respond to the grace of God by holding the gift in subjection to Himself and not becoming occupied with the gift rather than with the Giver. The Corinthians became so occupied with the gifts that they all wanted to do miraculous things, and so their eyes were taken off Christ and fixed upon manifestations, and they lost the sweetness of communion with Him.

We should be careful never to confound natural talent with spiritual gifts. For instance, God gives the gift of wisdom, the gift of knowledge, He gives the gift of teaching, the gift of preaching, the gift of exhortation, but that is altogether different from any mere natural ability along what we might call oratorical lines. A man may be a natural born orator; it may be just as natural to him to declaim in an interesting way, a compelling way, as it is for another to sing beautifully; but whether speaking or singing one needs something more than mere natural talent, and that is the power of the Holy Spirit. If a man is naturally talented, if

a woman has certain natural talents, these are not to be discarded when yielding themselves to Christ, but they are not to be put in the place of spiritual gifts. It is the Holy Spirit of God taking possession of the human instrument, working through it, and anointing it that displaces mere natural talent by spiritual gifts. Very often God takes people who are not at all remarkable for natural talent, and after they are converted and yielded to Him, the Holy Spirit, who divides to every one severally as He will, gives to such amazing power in the presentation of spiritual things. This is a divine gift. The apostle says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Cor. 12:31). And so, if you are already saved, if you are trusting Christ as your Savior, look up to God that He may bestow upon you some special gift of His grace that thus you may be better able to win others to Christ and help His beloved people. But never confound mere human eloquence with divine ministry, never confound mere oratory with preaching of the Word. Preaching the Word may be oratorical or it may lack that characteristic entirely.

The apostle Paul was naturally a wonderful orator, but when he stood before people to preach the gospel he said he held all that back lest their faith should stand in the wisdom of man rather than in the power of God. Divine gifts enable servants of Christ to minister to edification, to the salvation of sinners, and the building up of saints. But one may have these and be out of fellowship with God; therefore the importance of living day by day in the spirit of self-judgment that He may have the controlling power in the exercise of the gifts.

Through their gifts the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them. Paul had come to Corinth to minister the Word. These Corinthians had believed, and now in turn they ministered to others, and God graciously confirmed that testimony in blessing, so that Paul says, "Ye come behind in no gift." Whereas in other churches there may have been a few with some special gift, in Corinth there were a great many. There was no gift that was not found in that one assembly, and yet as we read the epistle we are amazed to find how far many of them had dropped from faithfulness to Christ and true communion with the Lord. Surely this is a warning to us.

In the last part of the seventh verse he says that they were waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word translated "coming" is not *parousia*, the word generally used for the coming of the Lord to the air when saints rise to meet Him, but it is *apokalupsis*, His unveiling, when He is manifested before the whole world. We are waiting for the unveiling of Jesus Christ. This, of course, is the goal. The Lord descending and calling His people to meet Him in the air is a preparation, but the goal is the unveiling. When He shall be manifested in glory, then we shall be manifested with Him. Therefore, we should be content to

live quiet, godly, unworldly lives now because in that day we shall have our reward as we shine forth with Him. The apostle put the coming of the Lord, the revelation of Jesus Christ, before these saints as the goal of all their hopes, and then tells them in the eighth verse that the Lord Jesus Christ for whom they wait shall confirm them unto the end.

I wonder whether you have noticed that this is the method of the Spirit of God throughout the Scriptures, particularly when He has to reprove Christians because of failure in the Christian life. He begins by commending them for all that He can and by assuring them that everything is going to come out all right in the end. In the first chapter of Philippians the apostle writes of his assurance regarding them. In verse 6 he says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [complete] it until the day of Jesus Christ." Here he says He "shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." The day of our Lord Jesus Christ is that day when He returns to call His own to be with Himself, the day when we shall stand before His judgment seat, when we shall all be "turned inside out," when all hidden motives will be brought to light, when we shall be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body since His grace saved us. And the apostle says, "He is going to confirm you unto the end." This is our confirmation. Some people make confirmation a special church ritual service. A child is under the care of the church until a certain year, and then he is confirmed and brought into the full membership of the church. The Bible has much to say about confirmation, but it is never presented as a rite. The confirmation of the Bible is always the work of the Spirit of God in the life making His truth real to the soul.

Now he says, as it were, "I am absolutely sure that your confirmation will go on until the day of Jesus Christ." In other words, the apostle had not the slightest thought that any one who had ever been born again would fail to reach heaven. He knew that many of them might fail grievously on the way, but he knew also that they were not responsible to keep themselves but that they were being kept by the power of God. People say to me, "Oh, you are one of those old-fashioned folk who believe in the perseverance of the saints." I generally answer, "To be perfectly frank, I am not at all conceited about the perseverance of the saints. My experience with myself and with a great many other saints is that most of us are not very much given to perseverance. We need to be prodded along all the time." I heard Sam Jones say he thought sometimes that the Lord allowed the Presbyterians to believe once saved always saved, and the Methodists, that you would only be saved at last if you hold on, because some of the Presbyterians are "such an ornery crowd" that they never would go on if they did

not feel sure they were eternally saved, and some of the Methodists are such a poor type that if the Lord did not keep the whip over them, they would never go through. That could be said of a great many, but when we turn to the Word of God we find that everything for a Christian depends upon the perseverance of the Savior. He who took us up in grace has undertaken to carry us through to the end. He knows how to deal with each individual saint in order that he may be confirmed unto the end. And the final consummation is this, that every believer will appear “blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That word, *blameless*, may be translated “unimpeachable” or “unaccusable.” In other words, when we stand at last at the judgment seat of Christ, God Himself is going to see to it that no charge can stand against any believer, because the Lord Jesus Christ has atoned for all our sins with His own precious blood. Every failure in life will be dealt with there, and all the wood, hay, and stubble will be burned in the fire of that day and we shall stand before our Lord unimpeachable, unaccusable.

In the ninth verse he brings before us a subject that is most precious to every Christian’s heart: “God is faithful.” I should like to take time to dwell on those three words, but I do not really need to say much about them. You who have known the Lord for years, do I need to try to reason with you to show that God is faithful? As you look back over the years, do not all His dealings with you tell the story that you have had to do with a faithful God? And be assured that when we come to the end of the way, when at last we meet with loved ones round the throne, we shall realize then as never before the faithfulness of God.

When I shall meet with those that I have loved,
Clasp in my eager arms the long-removed,
And know how faithful Thou to me hast proved,
I shall be satisfied.

“God is faithful.” I never have been faithful. I am afraid I never will be faithful in the absolute sense, but I have to do with a faithful God who has undertaken to see me through. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” God has not undertaken to save us merely as individuals, but having saved us individually He now introduces us into a wonderful fellowship of which our Lord Jesus is the risen glorified Head in heaven. That is why it is called, “the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,” and this is the only fellowship that Christians really need. Every local church should be an expression of this fellowship; it is the fellowship of the body

of Christ. You remember how the apostle in speaking of the communion says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). So, if you have been redeemed by His blood, if by the Holy Spirit you have been baptized into the body of Christ, you are called into the fellowship of God's Son, and you are one with every other believer on the face of the earth. We all belong to one great fellowship. It makes little difference what names people may use, they may be denominational, interdenominational or undenominational, but the great thing is, they are members of the fellowship of God's Son. That word, *fellowship*, really means "partnership." We have been taken into partnership in a wonderful firm of which the Lord Jesus is the Head and in which every other believer has a place. What a fellowship that is! Do you wonder that some of us never crave any other fellowship? We have found all we need in the fellowship of God's Son.

As we trace this word *fellowship* through the New Testament, we shall find many beautiful and suggestive thoughts. In the first epistle of John we find that we have been brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son. Is not that a wonderful thing—in partnership with the Father and the Son! We share their common thoughts. That is one meaning of "fellowship." You are interested in something that I am interested in, and we get together and have fellowship. Just think of it, God the Father and God the Son have taken us into partnership with Them in Their thoughts in regard to redemption, the glorious plan of salvation, and we enter into fellowship with the Father and the Son!

Then this fellowship is called "the fellowship of the Spirit" because it is not a natural thing. It is produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. There is no real Christian fellowship apart from Him, and that shows the incongruity of unsaved people uniting with the visible church of God. They cannot have fellowship with God's redeemed ones because that fellowship is produced by the Holy Spirit and He does not dwell in unsaved people. It is only as recipients of the Spirit that we enter into fellowship. The apostle Paul commends the Philippians because of their participation in the fellowship of the gospel. Fellowship is not only a sweet and lovely sentiment, it is a practical thing, that we may labor for the blessing and for the salvation of a lost world. Each one is to do his part. The preacher is not to do all the work. No, we have been called into a fellowship where each one has his service to do for the blessing of all, the fellowship of the gospel. Paul speaks of "the fellowship of ministering," which is not just certain individuals ministering, but every believer ministering according to his or her ability. This is the Christian ideal, and in the measure in which you

and I seek to walk in accordance with it shall we have real blessing in church relationship.

I wonder whether I am addressing any who perhaps are members of some church but have been saying, "If in order to have fellowship like this I must possess the Holy Spirit, I am afraid I got into the visible church too soon, for I am not conscious of possessing the Spirit of God, I am not conscious of the indwelling Christ." What you need is to come to God as a poor sinner, put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, come right out into the light where God is, for it is written, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

LECTURE 3

BAPTIZED UNTO WHOSE NAME?

1 Corinthians 1:10–17

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (vv. 10–17)

We have seen that God has established a wonderfully blessed fellowship here on earth into which He has called His saints: “God is faithful, by

whom ye were called unto [or into] the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." The fellowship of God's Son is that communion of saints embracing all believers everywhere, all who have been washed from their sins in the precious blood of Christ and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Men have formed denominations, and so the visible church of God is, in our day, divided into a great many different factions, and unhappily, some of these factions are very markedly un-Christian in their attitude toward others. Yet in all real Christian groups there are those who belong to the fellowship of God's Son and who, I am sure, are often troubled and distressed as they think of the way Christians are divided among themselves. I have heard people justify these denominational divisions by saying that each one represents a different regiment in the army of the Lord. As you have in the army the cavalry, the infantry, the artillery, the air corps, and the engineers, so we have all these different denominations, and each one can choose for himself just which one he prefers, for taking them all together they represent the one army of the Lord. This is a very comfortable way of looking at it if one does not want to have his conscience exercised by present-day conditions, but the fact of the matter is that Scripture tells us that divisions are the work of the flesh. It is not the Spirit of God who divides His people into these different groups. It is the work of the flesh in believers that leads them thus to separate one from another into different companies. You say, "What shall we do under such circumstances? Shall we leave them all and start another company?" In what sense would you then be better than they? This would simply add one more to the many divisions of Christendom. What shall we do? Shall we not recognize the fact that in spite of man's divisions there remains "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4), and so welcome all real believers who hold the truth of God as fellow members with us in the body of Christ and thus endeavor to rise above the spirit of sectarianism and denominationalism which prevails in so many places.

It is not denominationalism directly, however, that the apostle is rebuking in this passage. It was rather incipient divisions in the local church; for these Corinthian believers were not as yet separated from one another into various sects. But in the one local church in Corinth there were different cliques and factions, and so there was dissension and trouble. They were losing sight of the blessedness of true Christian fellowship.

Notice how the apostle addresses them, "Now I beseech you, brethren." How in keeping that is with grace. Where grace rules, "I command," becomes, "I beseech." "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye

all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." The admonition is to refrain from murmuring and complaining and from factiousness in the local assembly of Christ in order that all may be bound up in the same mind and in the same judgment. Of course, the Spirit of God speaking through the apostle does not attempt to force all believers to look at everything from exactly the same standpoint. That will never be. No two people ever see the same rainbow. If you stood near me looking at a rainbow, you would see it differently from what I would, because you would be a little away from me and get a slightly different view, and then, too, my eyes are very astigmatic and yours may be perfect. How foolish it would be for us to stand there and quarrel about the rainbow, about its tints, and so on. Rather let me say, "I am so glad you are able to see it so much more clearly than I, that with your perfect eyes you can get so much better a view of it than I with my astigmatic vision." And you can think kindly of me and say, "Well, I hope the day may come when you will be able to see as clearly as I do." That is the way the apostle puts it in his letter to the Philippians, "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. . . . Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (3:15-16). We do not see eye to eye even as we read the Scripture. So much depends on our education, on our cultural standards, on our environment. We often misunderstand statements of Scripture because of not being more familiar with the languages in which the Bible was originally written.

You say, "But it says we are to be 'perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.' How can that be if we do not all see eye to eye about everything?" If we were to insist that we could have no real fellowship unless we did this, I am afraid our church fellowship would become a very small circle indeed. I do not know where you could find a dozen people who see eye to eye on everything. We have all laughed at the old Quaker who left one meeting-place after another, and finally someone said to him, "Well, what church are you in now?"

He said, "I am in the true church at last."

"How many belong to it?"

"Just my wife and myself, and I am not sure about Mary sometimes."

It would simmer down to that if we could not have fellowship with any except those who see things exactly as we do. But what about "the same mind"? "We have the mind of Christ." "The same mind"—that is the lowly mind, the subject mind, the mind that was displayed in Jesus. You may look at things one way and I look at them differently, but if we have the mind of Christ we are not

going to quarrel, but will get along in real happy fellowship considering one another and praying for one another. And then, “the same judgment”—what does that mean? We read that we are to increase in knowledge and in all judgment. That does not mean judging one another, but it means discernment.

Every believer has the Spirit of God dwelling within him to give him discernment, and when things come up about which we differ, if we depend upon the guidance of the Spirit of God, He will give the discernment we need. I am afraid some of us never get very far in real discernment, and the reason is that we neglect the study of our Bibles. We are called “a royal priesthood.” In the Old Testament times no man was allowed to be a priest who had a flat nose. What does the nose speak of? It speaks of discernment. Some dish is brought to you and you smell it. You have discerned that there is something wrong with it and do not want to eat it.

Out among the Navajo Indians they had a peculiar idea about the nose. One old Navajo said to me, “Long Coat, where is the mind located?”

I said, “It functions through the brain.”

“No,” he said, “it is the nose.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Well, when you want to go anywhere, doesn’t your nose settle it first and then you follow it? When you come to a corner, your nose turns first and then the rest of you goes after it, and when you want to know whether to eat a thing, don’t you use your nose first to find whether it is suitable?”

He was a wise Navajo. The nose does speak of discernment, and a flat-nosed priest was one who could not discern, and God said that he could not serve. I am afraid many of us as believers are flat-nosed. We are taken up with almost anything that seems to have some scriptural backing, and we listen to all kinds of teaching, and pay little attention to the careful study of the Word of God. People say, “I go anywhere; I listen to everything, for I can get a little good out of everything.” If you do this, you will soon lose all ability to discern the truth as it is in Jesus. It is barely possible that one could so train his digestive powers as to get nourishment out of sawdust, but why eat that when you can eat good substantial oatmeal? And what is the use of going after all kinds of fads and follies when you can have the pure unadulterated Word of God? “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Now the apostle gives one of his reasons for writing this letter. “It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” Observe first, the apostle has heard a bad report about these Corinthians. He writes them about it and tells them

exactly who brought the bad report. He would have no sympathy with these anonymous letter-writers who write, "Dear Pastor: Perhaps you do not know it, but there is a woman in the church doing very prominent work who is a thorough hypocrite. I hope you will see that she is disciplined. Sincerely yours, A lover of Christ." The apostle would never pay any attention to a thing like that, nor would he have any sympathy with the person who came to him and said, "Brother Paul, I am sorry to speak to you about this, but there is one of our brethren—don't for anything say that I told you—but Mr. So and So, oh, Brother Paul, it is perfectly dreadful—I do hope you will do what you can—but don't give him the least idea that I told you." I think Paul would say sternly, "What business do you have coming to me slandering a brother when you are not willing to face him openly about it?" And so when they sent a bad report to Paul regarding these Corinthians, he wrote them about it and said, "I received this report from the house of Chloe." If it is not true, the house of Chloe would have to face the fact that they had been guilty of libeling the Corinthians. In this case it was true, but Paul is straightforward about it and said, "It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you"—there was division right in the local assembly of Corinth. Then he uses an illustration to show what he means. "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ."

"I am of Paul"—Paul, the teacher. "I like real Bible teaching, I do not have much use for this other kind of thing, I am not interested in evangelism and exhortation. I like Brother Paul, for he feeds my soul—I am of Paul." And another said, "I am of Apollos." Apollos was an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. "I like a man who can stand up and give a wonderful oration, a man who can give a great address winding up with a marvelous peroration that almost brings you out of your seat. That is the man for me. I am not concerned about these dry Bible teachers, I want something to thrill my blood and stir my soul." And then others said, "I am of Cephas. I like these practical men, these exhorters, Cephas, the man who over and over again used the words, 'I stir you up.'" And then others said, "Well, you may have Paul and Apollos and Cephas, but I am of Christ. I am not interested in any one else. I do not need any man to teach me, I am of Christ, and I do not recognize any of the rest of you. Stand by, for I am holier than thou." Have you ever seen that crowd? They are the most conceited of all.

Those were not the actual names that were used. In 4:6 we read, "These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written,

that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.” Paul is saying, “You see, I have simply used this figuratively.” It was not actually Paul and Apollos, it was men in their local group, and they were saying, “Well, I am for this brother and I am for this other one,” and another, “I am of Christ and am not interested in any of the rest of them.” And so Paul put in his own name and that of Apollos and Cephas to illustrate how wrong this was. And then he asks the question, “Is Christ divided?” Is it only a little group who are of Christ? Even those who sometimes say, “I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas,” if they are truly converted, are all of Christ. And so no one group should arrogate that distinction to themselves.

“Was Paul crucified for you?” What does he mean by that? I am not to take any man and make his name the head of a party, I am to remember that the fellowship to which I belong is that of the One who was crucified for me. We owe a great deal to Paul. I think after I have seen the Lord Jesus Christ and my father and mother, the next one I want to see is the apostle Paul. I want to have a good talk with him and tell him how much the messages he left on record have meant to me. But Paul was not crucified for me. He helped to give me a better understanding of the One who was crucified for me and so I value his ministry.

“Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” Why does he put this question? The only One that I am to recognize as the Head of the church of God is the One in whose name I was baptized. Do not get the idea as some have that the apostle Paul was putting a slur on baptism, that he meant to imply that baptism was an unimportant thing, eventually to have no further place in the church of God. He is recognizing it as a tremendously important thing when he bases his argument upon it. When you became a Christian, in whose name were you baptized? In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Very well then, you belong to Him. Recognize the entire fellowship of which He is the Head, but do not try to make His name the head of a party and do not make the names of His servants the heads of parties, but recognize that the only real Head is Christ.

Because of the fact that these Corinthians were making so much of individuals, Paul says, “I am very thankful as I look back that I personally did not do the baptizing in many cases.” He is not saying, “I am thankful that you were not baptized.” They were baptized. We read, “Many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized.” Their baptism followed their believing. But he says, “I am very thankful, since you are so given to party spirit, that so few of you can say, ‘I have been baptized by Paul.’ ‘I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus [he was the ruler of the synagogue] and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.’” And he adds, “And I baptized also the

household of Stephanas.” Evidently Stephanas was not with them at this time because he was one who ministered elsewhere. We read in the last chapter of this epistle, verse 17, “I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.” Stephanas, apparently, was a traveling preacher. Elsewhere Paul tells us that the household of Stephanas had “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (1 Cor. 16:15). Finally he said, “Besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.”

Now he gives his closing argument: “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” Observe, he is not saying that he was not commissioned to baptize, but he is saying that he was not *sent* to make baptism the important thing. He was sent to preach the gospel. As an apostle he went out preaching, and when any believed the gospel they were baptized. This is the opposite to the great church systems of today and also of Roman Catholic missions. Where Catholicism goes it is its first business to get as many infants together as possible and baptize them, but the apostle says that he was not sent to do that, he was sent to preach the gospel, and when they believed that gospel, they were baptized.

There are many things that are right and proper in their own sphere which must, of necessity, occupy much of a preacher’s time, but it was not to do these things he was set apart as a servant of God and sent into the world. He was ordained of God to preach the gospel. And so with Paul. His great ministry was making Christ known, “not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” He did not depend upon mere human oratory or rhetoric, but on the power of the Holy Spirit enabling him in all simplicity to present to the people a crucified, risen, ascended, and returning Christ, that all hearts might be taken up with Him and men be brought to put their trust in Him. That is the thing that unifies. As Christ is presented to the hearts of God’s people they are drawn together, they are drawn to Him, they are occupied with Him, their glorious Head.

LECTURE 4

THE SIMPLICITY OF PREACHING

1 Corinthians 1:18–24

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (vv. 18–24)

The apostle Paul's great business was proclaiming the cross. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." There is a challenge in almost every word in this verse.

"The preaching of the cross." The word translated "preaching" is not the ordinary word for "announcing" or "proclaiming," which is so frequently used

in the New Testament; it is the “Logos,” that which is used for Christ Himself in the gospel of John. “In the beginning was the Word [the *Logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). It is the ordinary term for a spoken message, and the apostle here puts the word of the cross in contrast to the word of wisdom of verse 17. There he says that it is his aim to preach the cross not with wisdom of words, or it might be just reversed, to give the exact meaning of the original, not with the words of wisdom. When he presented the cross, the doctrine of the cross, he did not want to hide it by beautiful verbiage, he would not obscure the message by human eloquence, nor weaken or dilute it in any way by charming rhetoric. He did not desire people to listen to him with admiration and go away exclaiming, “What a brilliant preacher, what a splendid orator!” instead of saying, “What guilty sinners we are and how amazing is the love of God that sent His Son to die and bear the shame of the cross for our redemption!”

Some years ago a gentleman living in a country town in England went to London, and while there listened to some of the great preachers of that day. Writing home to his wife he said, “Last Sunday I went in the morning to hear Dr. So-and-So (he named one of the most eloquent men occupying a London pulpit at that time), and in the evening I went to the Metropolitan Tabernacle to listen to Charles Spurgeon. I was greatly impressed by both of them. Dr. Blank is certainly a great preacher, but Mr. Spurgeon has a great Savior.” Do you see the difference?

It is so sadly possible to spoil the message by dependence on that which simply appeals to the human mind, and so the apostle says, “I try to preach Christ, not by words of wisdom, that is, this world’s wisdom, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” Even the most utterly godless man can appreciate eloquence, oratory or rhetoric, whether he believes the message being proclaimed or not, but it is not the will of God that His servants should tickle the ears of their hearers but that they should grapple with the consciences of those to whom they are speaking. If I am addressing any unsaved ones who are still in your sins, let me earnestly remind you that you are in a most precarious position. One moment may seal your doom forever. If the brittle thread of your life were snapped and you should be ushered out into a Christless eternity, how hopeless would be your condition! How foolish then, how wicked would it be of us, if we should simply entertain you when we know, as Archibald Brown once said, “There is only the thickness of your ribs between your souls and hell.” How guilty before God we should be if we sought the admiration and praise of our hearers instead of endeavoring to bring them face to face with their sins before God and seeking to get them to flee to the cross for refuge.

It was this that had gripped the apostle Paul. He knew that men were lost without Christ, that there was no hope for them save through the cross, and so he said, "I do not want anything that will hide the cross. I do not want to decorate the cross with flowers and ribbons and tinsel, and make people lose sight of what it really is, the declaration of man's utter depravity and the manifestation of God's infinite love. It is the preaching of the cross, the word of the cross, in opposition to the word of wisdom. 'The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.'"

What do we mean when we speak of the cross? I wonder sometimes if we have any conception in our day of what the cross meant when Paul wrote these words. Cicero says, "The cross, it speaks of that which is so shameful, so horrible, it should never be mentioned in polite society," and yet you find Paul exclaiming, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). The cross meant far worse than the gallows or the electric chair means today, because it declared that the one who was hanging there was guilty of the vilest, the most awful crimes, and was utterly unfit to live, that he was rejected of man and accursed of God. And this cross bore our Lord Jesus Christ! What does it mean? It means that man's heart was so wicked, so sinful, that there was no other way by which he could be saved than through the Eternal Son of God becoming Man and suffering the most ignominious death for his redemption. But it means too that in the most complete way man's heart has been fully exposed, for when God thus sent His Son, man cried, "Away with him! Crucify him, crucify him!" There at the cross man told out the very worst of his nature, but God told out the infinite love of His heart. Peter said to the men of his day, "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). If you want to know how wicked you are by nature, if you want to get an understanding of the awfulness of the sins of which your heart is capable, stand in faith before that cross and contemplate again God's holy, spotless Son hanging on that tree suffering unspeakable anguish, the very expression of man's attitude to God, the word of the cross.

It is not merely the physical suffering that men heaped upon Jesus that made atonement for sin, for we read, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10). God made Him to be the great sin offering. And so the word of the cross is the story of God's infinite love to guilty men. Righteousness demanded that sin be punished, and there upon the cross it was

punished to the full in the Person of our blessed Substitute. And now the word of the cross goes out to all the world, and as man at last is going to be judged by his attitude toward that cross, “the [word] of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.”

I am sorry they translated that word, “perish,” for that may throw us off the track. Some may think that someday if you reject the cross and the One who died there, you are in danger of perishing, but that is not what he is saying. It is something far more solemn, something that ought to affect you very much more, if you are unsaved. What he really says is, “The [word] of the cross is to them that *are lost* foolishness.” Them that are lost! “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost” (2 Cor. 4:3). Do you get the solemnity of that? Not in danger of being lost by-and-by, not that you will be lost if you finally persist in rejecting Christ and die in your sins. That is terribly true, but this is more solemn than that. They *are* lost. If the Christ of that cross is not yet your Savior, you *are* lost. If you get up and walk out unsaved, you go out lost and go down the street lost; if you get into your car and drive off, you drive off a lost man or a lost woman, and if a crash comes and you are suddenly ushered into eternity, you go into eternity lost, to be lost forever. Men do not think of these things, they do not face these things as they are. If the cross as yet means nothing to you, you are lost. “The preaching of the cross is to them that [are lost] foolishness.” “Oh,” they say, “I do not understand it at all. The very idea that a man, no matter how good he is, could be nailed to the cross and there make atonement for my sins, is foolish, is repugnant to me.” Very well, “if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” That is why you do not understand; it is because you are *lost*. What a terrible condition to be in!

Then look at the other side. “But unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” “Us which are saved.” Of whom is he speaking? He is speaking of a people who once were lost but are now saved. But someone says, “I do not get that. You mean they are in process of salvation for, of course, nobody can be sure of his final salvation until the day of judgment, when at last he stands before God and the question is there definitely decided.” That is not what the Book teaches, dear friend. It contemplates people already lost and people already saved. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8–9).

An old Scotch woman had been very religious, she had gone to church all her life and she always hoped that at last she would get dying grace and be fit for heaven. She went one time to a meeting where two earnest servants of God were preaching and when she came home, they said to her, “Well, Grandma, how did

you like the preachers?" "Well," she said, "I could not make them out. The first man got up and talked to folk he said were saved already, to folk so good I did not know there were any in our town like them. And then another man got up and preached to folk so wicked that he said they were lost and going to hell. But there was not one word for me." She was not lost and she was not saved, according to her own estimation. But there are just the two classes, "Them that [are lost]" and "us which are saved," those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, those who have faced their sins in the presence of God and have seen in the cross, in the work of the cross, that which has satisfied God and that in which their hearts can rest. They are saved right here and now.

Am I addressing anybody who has been in doubt about that? Perhaps you are a church member, perhaps you profess to be a Christian, and yet have often had doubts as to whether you are really saved. Suppose that you have never been saved (you had better give yourself the benefit of the doubt), will you, right now, take your place before God as a poor, lost sinner and look up in faith to Him who died on yonder cross and tell Him you are the sinner for whom He suffered and that you are going to rest in Him?

Years ago my father had an old friend who was a familiar figure in our home when I was a boy. One day after he had been saved for many years someone said to him, "Mr. Ross, do you ever doubt that you are saved? Has it ever come to your mind that you have made a mistake and that you are not really saved?" He said, "It is strange that you should ask me that question for, do you know, last night when I was on my way to the meeting where I was to preach the gospel, it just came to me as though a voice spoke, 'Donald Ross, what on old hypocrite you are! You have never been saved at all,' and I could hardly tell whether it was the voice of the Devil or whether it might be the voice of the Lord. I said, 'Man, could that be true? After years of preaching Christ to others, could it be true that I have never been saved?' And then I said, 'Well, Lord, if it is all true that I have just been thinking I am saved, I am so thankful that Jesus died for hypocrites, and I come to Him now just as I am.'"

Just as I am! without one plea
 But that Thy blood was shed for me,
 And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
 O Lamb of God! I come!

This dear old saint said that in a moment the cloud was lifted and he knew that he had been listening to the voice of the Devil and not that of God.

If you are not clear, let me beg of you, shut your eyes and ears to everything else just now and lift your heart to God and trust the One who died on the cross for you, trust Him as your Savior, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38).

Well, then, unto us which are saved the word of the cross is the power of God. That is, there is no human energy that converts people, we cannot convert them by any ability of our own. Somebody said to me a short time ago, "You know Dr. So-and-So, well, he is a grand man of God. He converted me ten years ago." I know that he meant that this dear servant of God had presented the gospel which he had believed. But it is not servants of Christ who do the converting. We cannot save people, we cannot give men peace with God; it is the word of the cross that is the power of God. Here is a poor, troubled, anxious soul not knowing what to do or where to go; suddenly the Spirit of God presents the cross, the fact that Christ on the cross died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and faith leaps up in the heart, and the soul says, "Thank God, He died for me!" In a moment that soul passes from death to life. The word of the cross is the power of God. Sometimes we have to preach about a great many other things, but in a sense I begrudge the time that has to be given to other subjects when I think of men who might be sitting before me who have not seen the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. How all this writes "folly" over everything of the natural mind, for the apostle referring to Isaiah says, "It is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.'"

Men pride themselves in their philosophies, in their reasoning powers, but no philosophy in the world would ever have reasoned out the need of the cross nor have suggested that only through the death of Christ sinners could be saved. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe?" that is, the reasoners, for reasoning goes for naught in the light of the cross. "Where is the disputer of this world?" When he mentions the scribe, he is naturally referring to the Jews, the wise men in Israel, who tried to work out a way of salvation through systems and ritual, but the apostle brushes them to one side. What does he know of the word of the cross? And then the disputer, the Greek philosopher, proud of his learning, investigating all the various sciences and systems of thought of his day. But not one of them would ever have dreamed of Christ dying on a cross as the means of salvation for sinners. So he said, "Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Mere wisdom would never have delved into the mystery of the cross. It is a striking fact that our English word, *world*, is made to do duty for two Greek words here. It might be rendered,

“Where is the disputer of this *age*? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this *world*?” In the first instance it is *aion*, “the age,” and in the second instance it is *kosmos*, this “ordered universe” in which we live. The whole trend of the age is against the word of the cross. The wisdom of this age would never have thought that only by the death of the Son of God on the cross salvation could be wrought out, and so far as this ordered universe is concerned, the things that men pride themselves in are only foolishness in the sight of God. “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision” (Ps. 2:4).

Well might the omnipotent God laugh (I do not say this irreverently) as He hears the ravings of these godless professors in our universities, trying to explain the mystery of the universe, as they measure everything by their own little foot-rules, delving into things utterly beyond human comprehension, deliberately turning away from the revelation that would make everything plain.

“For after that in the wisdom of God”—God has permitted man to grope and grope and do his best to find out these hidden mysteries, to come to an end of himself at last—“the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” What is preaching? It is a simple proclamation, and it has pleased God by what looks to man like foolishness, the simplicity of making an announcement, to save them that believe. I stand up in the name of the God of heaven and declare that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3–4). The world says, “Foolishness! You could not prove that if you had to.” No, I could not; but I repeat the announcement: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” And whenever a man is humble enough and lowly enough to believe the announcement, he is saved. “It pleased God by the [simplicity of an announcement] to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign.” They say, “Give us some evidence that this is true; work some miracle.” Some say, “If you could work miracles today, would it not be wonderful?” I do not know that it would. If I had apostolic power and could go through an audience and lay my hands upon some poor cripple and he would leap to his feet well and whole, I fancy I could fill a building and we would have all kinds of cripples coming, but I have never heard of anything like that causing poor sinners to awake and turn to Christ. Even when the apostles could do these things, men turned on them and tried to kill them, as in the case of Paul at Lystra.

It is the preaching of the cross that saves. That is what guilty sinners need. “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ

crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” Someone says, “But Paul, if you know it is a stumbling block and foolishness, why don’t you serve it up to your audience in such a way as to get rid of those elements?” And Paul would answer, “Because if I make it attractive to the natural man, it will not be the means of salvation to sinners.” “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” This involves the work of the Spirit of God. He must prepare the heart. This is the effectual call.

There is a general call that goes to all men, there is an effectual call when the Spirit of God drives the truth home, and a man realizes that God is tugging at his heart to draw him to Christ. “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” This was the apostolic message. “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). That message still has the same power as of old. God give us to preach it in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

LECTURE 5

CHRIST, THE WISDOM OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:25–31

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (vv. 25–31)

The foolishness of God! What a striking expression! I remember on one occasion a friend of mine, a very faithful preacher, advertised on a large billboard in a Canadian city that he would preach on these words. He was almost immediately summoned before the magistrate and asked if he did not know that

there was a law in Ontario against blasphemy. He had to explain that the topic advertised was simply a quotation from Holy Scripture. The expression, of course, is akin to that of verse 21, “the foolishness of preaching,” and in commenting on the former passage we suggested that it might be rendered “the simplicity of preaching,” and so here we learn that the simplicity of God is wiser than men. That is, the program of the gospel that seems so simple to the worldly wise is after all the source of all wisdom, wiser far than all of man’s philosophies.

Then we are told that the weakness of God is stronger than man. The weakness of God refers to the cross. Christ was crucified through weakness. He, the omnipotent One, chose in infinite grace to take the place of a helpless prisoner in the hands of His enemies. At any moment He might have destroyed them by His power, or, if He was still to keep in the place of weakness, He could have prayed for help from above and twelve legions of angels would have been sent to rescue Him. But He did neither of these. He humbled Himself unto death, and that death for the destruction of him who, up to that time, had the power of death, that is, the Devil.

The believer’s calling is brought out very effectively in verses 26–29. In making up the members of the body of Christ, it has not pleased God to choose many from among the wise, the mighty, the noble, or the great men of this world. Lady Huntington, the friend of Whitfield and the Wesleys, who took such an active part in the great revival movement of those wonderful days, used to say that she was only going to heaven by an *m*. When someone asked her what she meant, she stated that she was so thankful that Scripture did not say, “not *any* noble are called,” but “not *many* noble.” Therefore she got in by an *m*. Had God selected those whom the world admires as the pillars of His church, to a very large extent it would have destroyed the very thing He had in view. It was His desire to manifest the results of His grace. He works, not with what He finds, but with what He brings. He delights to take up those whom the world looks down upon and to make them devoted saints and faithful servants who will be to the praise of His glory throughout all the ages to come. So we read that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.” He has, in His sovereign grace, taken up “the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty,” base things, things that are despised has God chosen, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are.

Look back over the history of the Christian church. What wondrous stories it tells of grace reaching down to the lowest, the poorest, the most insignificant, bringing such to repentance, creating faith in their souls by the word of truth of the gospel, regenerating them, justifying them from all things, sanctifying them

by the Holy Spirit and the Word, and then sending them out as ambassadors for Christ to turn the world upside down by the simplicity of preaching the message of the cross. The earlier followers of the Lord Jesus Christ were, with very few exceptions, men from the lower walks of life: fishermen, tax collectors, Galilean peasants! Judas was the only “gentleman” in the entire apostolic band. He was from Judea, the bursar of the little company, and he turned traitor. But God filled those men from the common walks of life with the power of His Holy Spirit and through them won thousands more to a saving knowledge of His Son. Saul of Tarsus stands out himself in vivid contrast, and one who, whether saved or not, would have had some great place among the people of that day, but he is the one who writes the words that we have been considering, and he counted himself among the base things, and the things that are not, and thanked God that to him it was given to be used of God to bring to nought the things that are.

The reason for all this comes out clearly in the twenty-ninth verse in a succinct statement, “that no flesh should glory in his presence.” Had God taken up the wealthy and the powerful, it would have given the flesh a large place in the eyes of men at least, but by choosing the weak things He had the greater opportunity to manifest His own power. In themselves they could accomplish nothing; through Him they did valiantly. Therefore all the glory belongs not to them but to Him. He has said, “My glory will I not give to another” (Isa. 42:8).

How we need to remind ourselves again and again of these things today. It has always seemed to me that there is so much mawkish sentiment linked with so-called religious leaders, even in the professing church of Christ. As teachers and preachers are presented to audiences, it is considered the right thing, the proper thing to laud them to the skies, to expatiate on their brilliancy and learning and wonderful personality, until I myself have often felt grieved and shocked and thoroughly ashamed as I listened to such laudations. One cannot imagine the apostle Peter so introducing his beloved brother, Paul, nor can we think of Paul presenting his fellow laborers, Epaphroditus, Titus, or Timothy in such a manner to those to whom they were to preach. He does indeed say the kindest things of them all, for he loved them truly and was grateful to God for all the good things seen in them; but as he speaks of them, he does not dwell upon their ability or personality or charm or wonderful gifts, but rather on their devotedness to Christ in suffering for His name’s sake. Surely there is a lesson in all this for us. If we give to man the glory which belongs alone to God, we may be certain that we shall incur the divine displeasure.

Let us now consider the wonderful thirtieth verse, and as we quote it, let me make a slight change from the text of our splendid King James Version, a change

which I believe any scholar will recognize as warranted by the original text, and which brings out more vividly the actual truth that the apostle means to set forth: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom: even righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." That is, Paul is not telling us exactly that Christ is made four things to the believer, but rather one, and out of this one three others spring. Christ is made unto us wisdom. He is Himself the wisdom of God. "In whom," we are told in Colossians 2:3, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." People often speak of the "problem of Jesus," the "problem of Christ." There is no problem of Christ. Christ is not a problem: He it is who explains every problem. Listen to that poor, sinful Samaritan woman at the well. She had many questions over which she had puzzled for years. As she conversed with the Lord Jesus, the conviction evidently grew upon her that here was One whose wisdom was superhuman. Timidly, and yet hopefully, I am sure, she exclaimed, "I know that Messias cometh which is called Christ" (John 4:25). No doubt the thought in her mind was this: "Oh, if I could only see Him. If He could come in my day, I would go to Him with all my cares, with all my problems and perplexities, and He would explain everything." Jesus, looking at her with those wonderful eyes of His (they had already seen into the very depths of her soul), answered, "I that speak unto thee am he" (v. 26). Startled, she looked again upon Him, feasted her own eyes on that wonderful face until she was absolutely convinced that the words He spoke were true. One might have expected a torrent of questions, but no—she had found the Messiah. Every problem was settled when she knew Him, and away she went to the city to call others to meet Him too. And so I say again, there is no problem of Christ, but Christ is the key to every problem. To know Him is to have all the knowledge that is really worthwhile. And we who are saved are in Him. That is a remarkable expression which Paul uses over and over again, "in Christ Jesus." It speaks of our new standing before God. It tells of the intimate union that subsists between the risen Lord and all His own. In Him there is no condemnation. In Him we are accepted in all His own blessed perfection. And God has made Him unto us wisdom. Everything we need for our souls' deliverance is found in the knowledge of Christ. Our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption, all are found in Him.

It is well that we should dwell on each of these words separately, and be clear as to their exact significance. Righteousness. We had none of our own. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). All that we thought to be such we have learned is but as polluted rags in the sight of an infinitely holy God. But He has set forth Christ, the risen Christ, who once bore our sins in His own body on

the tree, as the expression of the righteousness of God. We are made the righteousness of God in Him. “This is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6), and so we stand before God in a perfect, unchallenged righteousness, complete in Christ.

Sanctification. Whether we think of sanctification as practical or positional, nevertheless all are found in Him. To be sanctified is to be set apart. For us it means, of course, to be set apart to God in Christ in all the perfection of His finished work. This is our positional sanctification. But it also means to be set apart from the sin, pollution, uncleanness, and corruption that prevails in this world, even as our Lord prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). It is as our hearts are taken up with Christ that we will know the reality of this.

Redemption. We who had sold ourselves for nought have been redeemed without money. “Redeemed [not] with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18–19). He gave Himself for us. His life is the price of our redemption, life given up to death in order that we might be delivered from the fear of death and enter into life eternal. We have everything in Jesus, and Jesus everything.

And so we have nothing for which we can give ourselves credit, but, “As it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Like David, we can each one exclaim, “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.” John Allen, the converted navy (or section-hand, as we would say in America), one of the first officers of the Salvation Army, exclaimed as he was dying, “I deserve to be damned; I deserve to be in hell; but God interfered!” Yes, and so may each redeemed one say. The sinning was ours, the disobedience was ours, the curse, the wrath, the judgment—all were our desert. The holiness is His, the perfect obedience unto death is His. He became a curse for us, He drained the cup of wrath, He bore the judgment. Thus He has become in very truth our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and to Him belongs all the glory now and through eternal ages.

LECTURE 6

JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED

1 Corinthians 2:1–8

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (vv. 1–8)

In the book of Acts we have the account of Paul's entry into Corinth where after a year and a half of earnest work he left a church that came behind, we are told, in no gift. Going into that brilliant but godless city where they gloried in

human ability and in human attainment, where they made much of the various arts and where they deified human lust and knew nothing of the true God, the apostle's soul was deeply stirred. He had been but a few days before in Athens and there, we read, had gone by invitation to the place where the philosophers, the intelligentsia, gathered to hear and to tell some new thing, and where at their own request he undertook to explain the message of the gospel. However, they did not permit him to come to the crucial point, for they interrupted him as soon as he spoke of a Savior who died and was raised again, and refused to listen further. Probably never was a more eloquent sermon preached than that which the apostle delivered that day on Mars Hill, and yet the results were somewhat meager. There were a few who clave to him, but the great majority turned away, rejecting him and his proclamation.

From Athens he went to Corinth. I do not believe there is any reason to think that he felt he had made a mistake in preaching as he did at Athens. His rule was this: "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." There he realized that he was addressing men of the highest culture and had to present the message in a way that he hoped would appeal to them; but upon going to Corinth he put aside everything, as far as he possibly could, that was merely human and went in absolute dependence upon the Spirit of God with one great message, "Jesus Christ and him crucified."

He says, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." He realized it was quite possible by the flowers of rhetoric to cover up, to obscure the shame of the cross, and so he did not permit himself any flights of fancy or of the imagination in presenting the glad tidings; but seriously, earnestly, solemnly, as became a man who stood between the living and the dead, he preached the message of the cross in all simplicity, for he determined, he said, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And that should still be the method of the servant of God; for after all, there is no other message that will avail for the salvation of sinners or the edification of God's beloved people. Everything centers in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." That is the Person and the Work. Always Christ personal was presented in apostolic preaching. Men were not asked to believe a creed, they were not asked to subscribe to a system of doctrine, but they were asked to receive a Person, and that Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think we make a mistake in supposing that just pinning our faith to a verse of Scripture is salvation. I wonder whether many have not been deceived in that way. I hear people speak of knowing they are saved, and when asked why, they

reply, "Because I believe John 3:16 or John 5:24," and you look for some evidence of a new life in them and do not find it. They never appear at a prayer meeting, but if there is a social affair, or something like that, they are present. Apparently they have no real interest in the study of the Word of God; you never see them at a Bible lecture. They have time for anything that ministers to the flesh, but very little time for spiritual food, and it makes one tremble for them. I cannot think of anything more dreadful than to have gone through life thinking that one was really saved, and then at last to be suddenly ushered into eternity and wake up forever lost. You see, believing a text does not save anybody. Believing in Christ saves all who trust Him. I believed every text in the Bible before I was converted. I never thought of doubting one of them until after I was converted. That may seem like a strange thing to say, but as a lad I believed all that I was told, that the Bible was the Word of the living God. I accepted it all. Some years after I was converted I became perplexed over certain things and began to doubt, and it led me to a deeper investigation, and then my faith was confirmed. But in all those years that I believed everything in the Bible I was not saved. I had never been regenerated, I had never received a new nature. I was lost. And if I had died in my sins, I could have quoted hundreds of Bible texts, I could have repeated chapter after chapter of Holy Scripture in the flames of hell while bemoaning the fact that I had never been acquainted with the Person that these passages of Scripture glorified. Do not make any mistake here, for it is one that can never be remedied if you go into eternity resting on a false hope. Examine your foundation, ask yourselves, Is Christ Himself precious to me? If He is, why do I not enjoy His Word more? Why do I not love to spend more time with Him in prayer? Why is there so much frivolity and levity and carelessness in my life? Why do I do so many things that I know the Lord Jesus would never do and cannot approve in me if I really love Him? He has said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

What is the use of professing to be a Christian if there is no evidence of it in the life? What is the use of speaking of the new birth, of talking about having eternal life if I live the same kind of a life that tens of thousands of respectable Christless men and women live all around me? What is the difference between my life and theirs? If this change has ever taken place in me, when did it take place? When did I open my heart's door to Christ and receive Him? If I have received Him, then He has come to dwell in me and that changes everything for me. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the [children] of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

Now observe, it is “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Some say, “We preach Christ,” but the Christ who lived on earth for those thirty-three wonderful years could never save one poor sinner apart from His death. Jesus Christ was crucified? Why? The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ throws into relief several tremendous facts. First of all, it emphasizes the wickedness, the corruption, the vileness of the human heart. Who was Jesus Christ? He was God manifest in the flesh. He was here in the world His hands had made, and His own creatures cried, “Away with him, away with him; crucify him!” Could we have any worse commentary on the iniquity of the human heart than that? Man, as far as he was capable, was guilty of the awful crime of deicide, he would murder God, drive Him out of His own universe. “The fool hath said in his heart, . . . no God” (Ps. 14:1). It is not exactly as in our King James Version, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” Many a man admits there is a God who says, “No God,” and that is what that verse really tells us, in the Hebrew. “The fool hath said in his heart, . . . no God.” “No God for me.” He has said, “I do not want God to come into my life, I do not want to be troubled about God, I want to take my own way, to do my own will.” And because men were set on that, they nailed the Christ of God to a cross. If there is anything that tells out what man is, this does.

Stand in faith by that cross, see the blessed Savior suffering, dying there; see the nails upon which He hangs and the blood dripping from those awful wounds; see the thorns crushed upon His sacred brow and the blood enwrapping His naked body as with a crimson shroud. That is what sin has done, the sin that is in your heart and in mine. That tells out the story of the wickedness, the deceitfulness of our hearts. The men who thronged about that cross and cried out in derision, “Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matt. 27:40), were no different from ourselves; their hearts were like our hearts. They were representative men. We may see ourselves there. The cross brought out, declared all the malignity that was in the heart of man, but it also told out the infinite love that was in the heart of God. One might well have understood it if God looking down upon that scene had let loose the thunders of His wrath and the lightnings of His judgment and had destroyed that throng in a moment; if He had said, as He did so long ago, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man. . . . I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth” (Gen. 6:3, 7). But no, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). When man cast Him out and nailed Him to a tree, God in infinite love for

sinner made His soul an offering for sin. It was as though He said, "That cross, the symbol of shame and agony, shall become the great altar upon which will be offered the one supreme Sacrifice which atones for the sin of the world—Jesus Christ and him crucified." What wonderful evidence of God's love for sinners is seen in that cross!

In the light of that cross how can men still go on doing the things, living in the sins, that led to it? The cross of Christ is that which casts light on everything that men glory in this world and stains all its glory, so that the apostle could say elsewhere, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). Did you ever think of it in this way? You profess to be a Christian, you say that you owe everything for eternity to the One whom the world rejected. What effect does that have upon your life? Do you still have fellowship with that world that cast Him out? Do you still participate in the things that characterize that world?

A Christian walked down the street one day intending to go to the theater. Something was on that he thought he would be interested in. He came to the very entrance, even stepped up and bought his ticket, and the next moment there came flashing into his mind, "If I go in there, I crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame." He tore the ticket up, and ran from the place, thankful to be delivered. If you as a Christian go back into the things of the world from which the death of Christ has separated you, you are denying the cross of Christ. That is what it means. If we understood this, what a separated people we would be, how it would do away with all this dilly-dallying with the world and its folly. How we would realize that we owe too much to the One whom the world rejected to go on with that system which has thus treated the Eternal Lover of our souls—"Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

"I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." I think every servant of Christ knows a little of that. How often as one thinks of facing an audience, the heart fails and the spirit cries out, "O Lord, what can I do, what can I say? Suppose I should make a mistake, suppose I should give the wrong message, how dire the effect might be on some! I can never undo it for eternity!" I can see Paul bowing before God every time he contemplated going out to preach the Word, and crying out, "O Lord, keep me from mistakes, let me have just the right word, give me to be Your messenger, save me from trying to attract attention to myself, save me from glorifying man."

"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Paul recognized the fact that

there is such a thing as meeting man on the soul-plane instead of the spiritual. A man may preach the gospel and yet do it "soulishly," on the soul-plane, depending upon that which simply appeals to the human mind, and finding perhaps, that at the psychological moment he had gotten a grip on the audience by a tender story, ask for decisions. And when the people respond, he says, "There now, what a lot of people have come to Christ," and perhaps not one in the crowd has had the conscience reached or has had to do with God about his sins. Paul was afraid of that. He said, "I do not want to preach things in such a way that my human effort will persuade them. I am depending upon the Holy Spirit of God and divine power to do the work."

"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Because, you see, if I make a profession of salvation on the strength of a discourse that has stirred simply my emotions and made me feel that I ought to do something about it, and also because of my admiration for the preacher; then, when the preacher is gone and my emotions are no longer stirred, I will find myself wondering whether I am converted or not, whether there is any reality in this thing or not. I felt so differently under the spell of that emotion; now I do not feel that way at all. If the Holy Spirit of God has presented Christ to me and I have received Him, never mind about my feelings, I am saved and saved for eternity. My faith stands, "not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." I rest upon His sure testimony.

We do not mean by this, the apostle says, that we have nothing but the simplicity of the gospel message to give to men; we seek also to lead believers into the deep things of God. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." What does that mean? Did you ever see a perfect Christian? Surely not in the absolute sense, but it means perfect in the sense of well-developed. When he talked to the unsaved or to young believers, he had one message, and when he talked to mature saints, he sought to lead them on into the deeper things of God. He does that in this epistle and elsewhere.

"We speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world." Christianity is a divine revelation, not a human theory. "Not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery"—something that is hidden from the Christless, that which the Spirit of God reveals to believers—"even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." There are rich treasures of wisdom, wonderful truths to make known; for in Christ are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And as we go on with Him we enter into a depth of understanding that the world knows nothing about.

“Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” If they had only known that the Man who stood in Pilate’s judgment hall that day, so meek, so lowly, answering never a word as He was vehemently accused, was God manifest in the flesh, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. And so God takes mankind up on the ground of ignorance and says, “I am going to excuse your ignorance, but there is one thing I will never excuse. After I enlighten you and present My Son to you, if you do not receive Him, I will never excuse that.” Men are excused because the light has not come, but not excused when the light has come. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

This is not to say that God will not judge sin wherever it is found. But simply that He holds men responsible for what knowledge of His truth they have, and not for what has never come to them. “All have sinned” and all “are guilty before God,” but judgment will be according to works and in perfect righteousness.

But when one trusts the Lord Jesus he is delivered forever from judgment. What a wonderful thing it is to know Him—“Jesus Christ, and him crucified!”

LECTURE 7

DIVINE REVELATION

1 Corinthians 2:9–13

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (vv. 9–13)

The apostle declared that in making known the gospel he sought to use all simplicity of speech, but when it came to opening up the truth of God to believers, there are deep things, wonderfully precious things, that cannot be given to the world at large, which form the hidden wisdom of God. The world has its various schools of philosophy, its deep things to which the average man on the

street does not pay much attention; and so God has His deep things which are not for the world outside, but for those who have already received the gospel message. The Lord Jesus Himself warned His disciples against casting pearls before swine. What did He mean by that? Simply this, the unsaved man, the man who has never been regenerated, has no more ability to appreciate, to enter into and enjoy spiritual unfoldings than the swine has ability to set a value on beautiful pearls, and therefore, the message for the unsaved is the gospel; but to the Lord's own people He would impart this hidden wisdom, that which none of the princes of this world knew, for he says, "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The apostle is quoting from the sixty-fourth chapter of the book of the prophet Isaiah. The singular thing is that a great many people stop here with the Old Testament quotation and say, "You know we cannot understand, we cannot be expected to understand or enter into the things which God hath prepared for us, because the Word tells us that, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'" And so they settle back and conclude that we must be content to be ignorant of these things, for God has said that they are not for us to know. Let us look at the passage in the Old Testament and see the connection in which it is found. In verse 4 we read, "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." This is the translation from the Hebrew. That which we find in the New Testament is the translation of the Greek version of the Old Testament, hence the difference in words, though the meaning is exactly the same. What is it that Isaiah tells us? It is that no man apart from divine revelation can understand what God has in store for His people in times to come. That was true in Old Testament days, but when we come to the New Testament, since God has revealed Himself in the Person of His Son and given this new revelation of the new covenant in the Gospels and in the Epistles, we must not stop with the verse in Isaiah. We must not be content to take for granted that we are still where they were in the Old Testament days, for that is the very thing the apostle tells us is not the case.

"*But* God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." In other words, the Old Testament speaks of times when there were great and wonderful mysteries which were kept hidden from all men. Even the prophets themselves, as enlightened as they were, knew

nothing of the special truths of this dispensation, but God has made them known now. Read the books of the Old Testament, read the Psalms, for instance, which give you the highest inspiration of the saints before the veil was rent, and you get no inkling of the heavenly calling or of believers entering through the rent veil into the very presence of God without an officiating priest between. You get nothing of Christ exalted at God's right hand and of believers linked with Him so that we can say, "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). The Old Testament gives us the preparation time. There we have God's people as children going to school, learning through symbols and types and shadows, but with no realization of the wonderful truths now made known, and therefore, Isaiah could say, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But all that has changed today. Now our eyes do see, our ears do hear, and our hearts should be able to comprehend the wonderful things which God hath prepared for those linked up to Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ. "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," and so we still need the Old Testament, for the things written there were for our learning.

We go back in the Old Testament and see the exercises of the people of God in years gone by, but we do not stay there; we learn wondrous lessons, but we move on to the full and glorious revelation that God has given in the new dispensation. It is here our souls revel in the precious truths now made known. Christians sometimes imagine that if they come to God in worship, for instance in singing, in the very words of Holy Scripture, like some of our friends who sing the Psalms, their worship takes a higher character than that of Christians using what they call "man-made hymns," and yet what is the fact? We might gather together and sing the Psalms week after week and year after year, and always be conscious of the fact that we are singing the very words of Scripture, but there would not be a syllable that would give us our place within the holiest, accepted in the Beloved; and you will find that where Christians are content thus to approach God in worship, they have no realization of the fullness of the Christian's position. It could not be, because the Psalms as all other Old Testament Scripture lead us up to the door, but they do not carry us inside into the fullest blessing. Therefore, you will generally find people who are wedded to the Psalms, precious as they are, a legal people, knowing very little of the fullness of grace, and most of them are content to go through life thinking it is altogether too much to believe that a man can be saved and know it in this life, just let them go on trusting and hoping, and perhaps God will give them dying grace at last.

You have heard of the good old Scotch woman who said, "We will not sing

any of these man-made hymns, we will sing just the Psalms of David to the tunes that David wrote!" The fact is that a Spirit-taught Christian today can enjoy in a hymn precious and wonderful truths which would have been amazing to David, truths of which he knew absolutely nothing. What a wonderful thing it is to think that we live in the dispensation of the grace of God. By the Holy Spirit God has now revealed these things formerly hidden unto us, "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." That may seem like a peculiar expression. The Holy Spirit is One with the Father and with the Son; our Lord Jesus puts the Trinity all on an equality when He tells His disciples to teach and to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You could not think of putting a creature in there and saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the blessed Virgin Mary," or, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy apostles." You could not do that, for you would be bringing His creatures on a level with God. But when you say, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," everything is in keeping because all are coequal and coeternal.

In what sense does the Holy Spirit have to search to find out the mind of the Lord? "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." In Himself He does not need to search, He does not have to study to learn the mind of God. But the wonderful thought is that in our dispensation the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in us, and it is through Him that we do the searching and the studying, and the Spirit of God opens the truth of God to us. People say, "I do not know how it is that some folks get such wonderful things out of their Bibles. I do not get them out of mine. I know I ought to read my Bible, and I do read it, perhaps a chapter a day, but I do not have much appetite for it, I do not get much out of it." I will tell you why. It is because you do not sit down over your Bible in a self-judged, broken spirit, putting out of your life everything carnal, everything worldly, everything unholy, and then depending absolutely on the Holy Spirit who dwells within you to search into the Scriptures for you, to open the truth of God to you. God has given you the Holy Spirit for that very purpose. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13). Take a poor, simple, ignorant Christian who can barely read or write and put him down over his Bible in dependence on the Holy Spirit of God, and he will get more out of a given passage of Scripture in half-an-hour than a Doctor of Divinity or a Doctor of Psychology, who studies it with a lot of learned tomes

about him depending upon his intellect instead of upon the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God opens the truth to those who depend on Him. I am afraid that many of us are absolutely careless of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. We are trying to make our own way through the world, trying to find out what is right and wrong in spiritual things instead of handing over everything to the Spirit of God and depending on Him to guide and lead and unfold the Scriptures. He came to do this very thing and He delights to fulfill this mission.

How strikingly the apostle illustrates this in verse 11: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." What does he mean by "the spirit of man which is in him?" Materialists tell us that the spirit of a man is the breath of a man. It is a striking thing that in Greek and Hebrew the same word may be translated "spirit," "air," "breath," "wind." They say the spirit is the air that you breathe, there is no personality about it, the body is all there is of man as far as personality is concerned. If that were true, would it not be absurd for the apostle to speak as he does here? Translate the word "spirit" by "breath" and you would read, "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the breath of man which is in him?" Is that not remarkable?—an intelligent breath! Is it your breath that knows things? Is it your breath that reasons and weighs evidence? Surely not. It is the spirit of a man. And what is the spirit of a man? It is the real man.

When God created man He created him a spirit living in a human body, and therefore God is called "The Father of spirits." Translate that, "God, the Father of breaths," how would that sound? No, God is a Spirit and man is a spirit, and therefore, in that sense, even unregenerated men are God's sons. The spirit is the personality. It is that which differentiates him from the lower creation, enables him to think, to weigh evidence, to reason, to investigate. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" I cannot read your thoughts, you cannot read my thoughts. We find people who profess to be able to do so, but they always make a botch of it. We try to read people's minds by their faces, but we often accuse them of things that are not so, as Eli falsely accused Hannah.

"What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" I might talk as humbly as possible and you might be foolish enough to go away and think, "What a lowly man that is!" and all the time I might be a kind of Uriah Heep, of Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, with a false humility. Another might seem to you to be proud while in reality he might be very humble. So Jesus said, "Judge not that ye be not judged." We are not to try to read other persons' minds for we will often be mistaken if we do. "What man knoweth the

things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" If my human spirit understands my thoughts, if my human spirit knows what is going on in my mind, do you not see the apostle's argument? The Holy Spirit knows everything that goes on in the mind of God. Is not that a wonderful thought?

"Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." And He has chosen to make them known to us. I can make known my thoughts to you, and you can make yours known to me. Very well, the Holy Spirit of God makes known the thoughts of God to us. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." This blessed Holy Spirit has been received by believers. He has come to indwell us, to control us, for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in order that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. That is the secret of learning the Bible, and understanding the truth. You come to the Book and study it in dependence on the Holy Spirit who dwells within and He will open it up. But let me give you another secret. He won't do that if you are grieving Him. As long as the Spirit is happy within you because you are living in a godly, unworldly, consistent manner, it is His delight to take the things of Christ and open them up; but the moment you grieve Him, the moment you give yourself to unholy thoughts or worldly behavior, yield to carnality, to things contrary to the Lord Jesus Christ whom you are called upon to represent here, then you grieve the Spirit of God and instead of the Holy Spirit being free to do what He delights to do, take of the things of Christ and show them unto you, He has to occupy you with your own failure and sins and shortcomings, in order to bring you to repentance and confession where you will seek to put everything right before God. So the secret of getting the mind of God as you study His Word is to live in the power of an ungrieved Spirit and go to the Book in dependence on Him.

"We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." We have them here, but do we know them? It is one thing to have a vast amount of knowledge shut up between the covers of a book, it is another thing really to know it.

You may have a large library. Everything in all those books is yours. But it is quite another thing to make all that accumulation of knowledge yours practically. It requires diligent study and careful reading. So with God's wonderful library, the Bible. We need the illumination of the Holy Spirit as we meditate upon its wondrous truths, for it is only in this way we can enter into its treasures. This Book was not written by men, except as they were used as penmen; it was given by God. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"

(2 Peter 1:21). And think of the folly of expecting to understand it if I just approach it from a carnal or intellectual standpoint. That is not the way to get God's truth. He has given it to me, but if I would appreciate it the Spirit must open it up, and I must walk in the Spirit.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Some people wonder what we mean when we speak of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. There are those who talk of the Bible being inspired in the sense that God gave to the writers of the different books certain thoughts and they embodied them in their own language to suit themselves, but that is not the truth of inspiration as taught in the Book. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth." They did not take divine truths and write them down in their own words. They expressed divine truths in the words that the Holy Spirit gave. He gave the words as well as the thoughts. Verbal inspiration means inspiration of the words. If the Bible is inspired at all, it is in its words, and that is what the apostle insists upon. When you come to the study of this Book and recognize the fact that the words were given of God, you will have such a conception of the wonder of the Book that you will delight in lingering over every syllable. How often we have studied the Book and one little word seemed to jump at us; we have looked it up and found the original meaning in the Hebrew or the Greek, found what the root is, and as we delved into it we have found there was not any other word that would have expressed that truth. It is like God Himself; it is perfect. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

He concludes this section with an expression that is a bit peculiar, one about which theologians have had a great many different views. "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual." That may suggest a comparison of one divinely-imparted line of truth with some other opening up of eternal verities. That is blessedly true, and that was perhaps the thought that the translators had in mind, but there is something deeper than that. Others have translated it, "Expounding spiritual things to spiritual minds," and that is surely important. If men are not spiritual, they cannot take in spiritual truth. One might endeavor to give them the deepest and most wonderful revelation from the Word of God, but they would not be able to take it in. It is the same in spiritual things as in natural things. Take music, for instance. If you do not have music in your soul, if you do not have a real sense of music, you cannot understand it.

I heard a man once tell of going to hear Jenny Lind, the famous "Swedish Nightingale," who eventually gave up the concert stage for love of Christ. Beside

the man sat a sea captain who had paid five dollars for his ticket but who drowsed and slumbered all through the concert. He went, out of curiosity, to *see* the noted singer, but he had no ear to enjoy her marvelous tones. He was unable to appreciate that wonderful voice that thrilled myriads who had a sense of musical values. To enjoy music one must have music in his own soul. This is just as true in regard to spiritual things. That is why people need to be born again and then they need to walk in the Spirit, for one cannot understand spiritual things unless he is living a spiritual life.

On the other hand, this last expression is not exactly personal in the Greek, it does not necessarily refer to individuals, and a better translation might be, "Communicating spiritual things by spiritual methods," or "by spiritual words." That seems to be a very satisfactory translation. It is the business of servants of Christ to communicate spiritual things by spiritual methods, not stooping to the cheap claptrap methods of the world as they seek to expound the Word of God, but in a reverent way opening up spiritual truths and using suited words in accordance with the testimony that the Holy Spirit Himself has given men. God give to each one of us a deeper appreciation of this marvelous revelation which we have in His Word.

LECTURE 8

NATURAL, CARNAL, AND SPIRITUAL MEN

1 Corinthians 2:14–3:8

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that

planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. (2:14–3:8)

In this passage we have three men brought before us: the natural, the carnal, and the spiritual. What are we to understand by these expressions? We often say there are only two classes of people in the world, those who are regenerated and those who are not; or, to put it in another way, those who are saved and those who are lost; and of course that distinction stands. But here the apostle divides mankind into three classes: the natural, the carnal, and the spiritual.

Who is the natural man? We read in verse 14 of chapter 2, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” The natural man is the man who has simply been born according to nature. Our Lord Jesus says in John 3, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” That is the natural man. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” That is the genesis of the spiritual man. But the word translated “natural” does not merely mean of the flesh. The word really means, psychical. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 the apostle Paul says, “And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He shows that man is tripartite. The spirit, the highest part of the man, that which differentiates him from the lower creation, is that to which God speaks. We read, “What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” It is the spirit that gives man intelligence above the brute. By the spirit man reasons, is able to weigh evidence; by the spirit he is able to listen to the voice of God.

On the other hand, the second part of man is called the soul, the *psyche*, and this word *natural* is an adjective formed from that word, *psychical*. “The [psychical] man [or the “soulual” man] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” When God created man, somebody has well said, he was like a three-story house; the lower story, the body; the second story, the soul, the seat of his natural instincts and emotions; and the third story, the spirit, the highest part of man by which he could look up to God. But when man sinned, there was a moral earthquake, and the top story fell down into the basement, and that leaves him a psychical man, it leaves the soul in the preeminent place instead of the spirit. When you remember that the soul is the seat of man’s emotional nature, you will realize that the natural man is a creature led not by conscience, not by an enlightened spirit, but by following the desires of his own heart as a soulish man because he follows his own affections and desires. He is a creature of emotions, and that is why it is so easy to say that every sin appeals in some way to the

emotions of the natural heart. At base all sin is selfish; we sin because we think we shall find a measure of satisfaction in that sin. Sin is always selfish, and the psychical man is a selfish being, he is a self-centered person, for after all, the soul is the self. The natural man, therefore, is the man who lives the self-life, the man whose spirit has never been quickened into newness of life; it is still down there a captive in the basement, if you will. You can see at once where that applies to you. What is your motive in life? Are you living to glorify God or are you living to enjoy yourself? Are you seeking your own desires or are you seeking to please the Lord Jesus Christ? As every saved person looks back to the old life, he can say:

I lived for myself, for myself alone,
For myself and none beside;
Just as if Jesus had never lived,
And as if He had never died.

That is the psychical man. He may be outwardly a very good man, a very gracious man, a very courteous man, a very kind man, as long as he can have his own way. He lives for himself and finds a certain satisfaction even in doing good. He learns as he goes through life that honesty is the best policy, that he is happier if he is honest, and therefore many an unregenerate man is a model of integrity. He gets a degree of happiness out of meeting the needs of other people; he may be a very kind man, and there is a glow of warmth in his heart when he hands something to a needy person and that person responds, "God bless you, sir, you don't know how much good you are doing." There may be all that and yet no thought of living for God, no thought of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. Some natural men descend into things groveling and debasing, their appetites lead them into licentiousness and inebriety, but other natural men take what has been called the clean side of the broad way, the higher way of the natural man, but it still is the way that leads to destruction. As you walk down that broad way you find all classes and conditions of people, some openly immoral, some vicious, some abominably unclean, others eminently respectable, looked upon with admiration by their fellows; some of them very religious and finding a certain amount of satisfaction as they wend their way to the great cathedral or little chapel, as the case may be; as they sit in a Christian, Jewish, or some other service, and as the meeting goes on they find satisfaction in feeling that they are doing the right thing. They are affected by the service, they love the music; if the preacher happens to be eloquent and appealing, they enjoy listening to him, and sometimes even though he is not eloquent, if he is earnest they like to listen to him.

When Charles Spurgeon was at the height of his fame as one of the greatest preachers of the gospel, many an unbeliever thronged to hear him, many a man who rejected Christianity delighted to listen to his sermons. On one occasion as a man, well-known as an infidel, was returning from Spurgeon's meeting, he met a friend who said, "Where have you been today?"

"I have been to hear the great preacher, Charles Spurgeon," he said.

"You surprise me," said his friend; "you do not believe a word he says."

"No, I do not, but he does, you know, and I get a certain amount of satisfaction in listening to a man preach as though he really believed what he was preaching."

Even a natural man can appreciate that, for he may set a certain value upon earnestness and intensity. It is very possible that one may be outwardly good, his life may be a very righteous one, he may be a man of integrity in business, be very kind and benevolent, and have a certain amount of religious feeling, and yet be a natural man.

What is needed to bring a man out of that state into that of a Christian? There must be a new nature, a renewing of the mind, he must be born of God. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). This natural man at his best with all his amiability and respectability cannot enter into, nor understand, divine things. Talk to him of the wondrous truths of the Word of God and he will look at you in amazement and will say, "I do not see the importance of these things." Tell him that God became Man for our redemption, that He was born of a virgin, and the man smiles tolerantly and says, "If you get any comfort in believing that, all right, but as far as I am concerned it involves a biological miracle which I cannot accept." Tell him that Christ died for our sins upon Calvary's cross and that it was there He shed His blood for our redemption, and he will smile again and say, "Rather an old-fashioned idea, that idea of blood atonement. I notice in my studies it has rather a large place in all the ancient religions, but of course I do not see it at all." "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4:3). Talk to him of the physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and again he says: "Of course it does not make very much difference whether His body rose; that is a small thing. His principles have been resurrected after being rejected by the men of His day, and they abide, and if we follow the rules He laid down everything will be all right."

It is only as the Spirit of God lays hold of him and gives him to see his lost condition that the gospel appeals to this man. Believing it he ceases to be a natural man, he is no longer to be placed in that category. He may be a babe in Christ but he is a Christian. However, when you turn to consider Christians,

you find two classes suggested in these words of the apostle Paul. He uses these words in verse 15, "He that is spiritual," and then in the first verse of chapter 3 he says, "I . . . could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal." Let us look at the word *carnal*. Literally it means "fleshly"; it is an adjective formed from the Greek word for "flesh." The term *flesh* as used doctrinally in Scripture does not refer to human flesh, but rather to the nature which we have received from Adam, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Now a carnal man, strange as it may seem, is a fleshly believer. There are many such persons. The carnal man has been regenerated, he has received a new nature, his spirit has been quickened into newness of life, and that spirit that fell into the basement is being elevated into its proper place by divine power, but the man finds he is still under the power of that old carnal fleshly nature in a large measure. Many a Christian's life is made up of mingled victories and defeats. As he walks with God, as he takes the place of lowliness and humiliation before God, as he feeds upon the Word, as he breathes the atmosphere of prayer, his spiritual life is developed and he grows in grace and in the knowledge of God. But if this believer is slothful in availing himself of the means of grace, he may find that even after being saved for some years he is still far from being the kind of a Christian that it is the desire of the Lord that he should be.

What is a carnal believer, a fleshly believer? It is best to find out from Scripture. In verse 3 we read: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions [or factions], are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Here is a Christian, one who has really trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, but as you get intimately acquainted with him, you find he is a very selfish person. He is delightful to get along with as long as he can have his own way. As long as he can run everything to suit himself he is perfectly happy and agreeable, but cross him in the least degree, bring something before him that is contrary to his own desires, and at once there is a stirring of the flesh within him and he is manifested as a carnal man because there is strife. Think of the Lord Jesus Christ. They could treat Him as they would, but He was always the meek and lowly One; they could not rouse His temper by ill-treatment and yet He had a temper. A spiritual Christian is not one who has no temper. Just as that knife of yours would amount to very little if not properly tempered so the Christian amounts to nothing if he is not properly tempered. We read of our Lord Jesus Christ being angry. He was in a synagogue on a Sabbath Day and there was a poor woman there bowed with disease, and His enemies were watching Him to see whether He would heal her on the Sabbath. He asked the question, "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days?" (Mark 3:4) but they would not answer Him,

and we read, "He . . . looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (v. 5). What made Him angry? It was their hypocrisy. Hypocrisy always stirred the indignation of the Lord Jesus Christ. They could heap every indignity upon Him they desired, that never stirred Him to anger, but let them heap indignities upon one of the least of His children and that stirred Him to the very depth of His being. When Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the Christians, Christ Jesus spoke to him and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). He never talked in that way to people when they ill-treated Him on earth, but when they ill-treat His own while He is in glory, He feels it keenly. When you find a Christian quick to resent what you do to him but not at all quick to resent what is done to others, you may be sure he is still carnal.

Then there is envying. A person who envies another manifests the marks of carnality. We are members of one body. If that is really so, if I am a member of one body with every other Christian, I ought to be just as delighted when my brethren are honored as though it were I, and I ought to be as deeply concerned when my brethren are distressed and in trouble as if I were in their place. Scripture says, "[If] one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). And we are exhorted to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). How different it often is! I can do something reasonably well, but when somebody else is preferred before me, I cannot appreciate what they do. I think I can preach a little bit, but somebody else is enjoyed more than I am, and instead of saying, "Thank God for the way He is using His servant," I sit in a corner and think, "What is it that makes the people so interested? I don't see anything in that kind of preaching." When I do this, I am carnal. You can apply that to everything else. If you cannot enjoy having somebody else preferred before you, you are carnal.

Then there are the faction-makers, the division-makers, those who try to bring in strife among the people of God. Here at Corinth they were divided into little cliques and were saying, "I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos," and every one had his favorite. Paul says, "That is just carnality. When you go on like that, you are acting like little babes." "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." If Christians could realize that when they compare one with another, say unkind things about some and laud others to the skies, it is just baby talk, they would be ashamed of it. Paul is telling us that it only shows carnality. It is not anything to be proud of, it is something that may well cause one to bow the head in shame. Paul says, "Here you are in Corinth, you have such wonderful attainments and are so proud

because you come behind in no gift, and yet you are just babies, so that I cannot unfold to you the things that I would like to. I have had to feed you with milk, and even now you are not able to be fed with meat. You are still big babies.” Paul was very faithful. The Corinthians gloried in men and they gloried in great swelling words, and some, I suppose, listened to Paul and said, “We don’t see anything in his preaching; we learned that years ago. Why doesn’t he go into the deeper things?”

A brother was a candidate for the pastorate of a church and he preached for the congregation on the text, “Thou shalt not steal.” The congregation thought it was great, and the pulpit committee met after the service to decide whether to give him a call. Finally one of the brethren spoke up and said, “I don’t believe in calling any man on one sermon. That was a fine sermon he preached, but I think we should ask this brother to come back again before we call him.” So they decided to ask him to come back the next Sunday. He did and he used the same text, “Thou shalt not steal,” and preached the same identical sermon. At the close the committee met again and said, “He must have forgotten that he preached that sermon last Sunday, we had better ask him back again.” So the next Sunday he got up in the pulpit and said, “You will find my sermon in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, ‘Thou shalt not steal.’” Before he could go on, a member of the pulpit committee got up and said, “You are forgetting that you preached that sermon here twice already; we want to hear you in something else.” The preacher replied, “I am going to preach on that text every time I come to this church until you learn to keep away from Widow Jones’s hen-coop of a night.”

So Paul says, “I cannot unfold the great things to you, you are still little babes, you are not developed yet, you are just carnal.” But now he says, “The spiritual are a different class.” Who are the spiritual? Those who walk in a spiritual way, those who are guided by the Spirit of God. The highest part of the man is now in ascendancy. Self does not predominate in this man, he lives to glorify Christ and walks on a higher plane than the carnal man.

“He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” What does he mean by this? The word translated “judgeth” is the same as in the fourteenth verse, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually *discerned*” (emphasis added). “He that is spiritual [*discerneth*] all things, yet he himself is [discerned] of no man.” He is able to see the difference between what is of God and what is of man, what is of the flesh and what is of the Spirit, what is of the new and what is of the old nature. The spiritual man discerns all things but he himself is discerned of no man. Other men cannot

understand him, if they are not spiritual. They say, "He is a queer kind of a man; he does not seem to be actuated by the motives of other men, he is not dominated by the principles that dominate other men." Sometimes they even say as in Isaiah's day, "The spiritual man is mad, he is not normal." Of course not, according to the present order, because he is controlled by a higher power. One of those old New England philosophers wrote, "If I do not seem to keep step with others, it is because I am listening to a different drumbeat." And if a man of God does not seem to keep step with the carnal and the worldly and the Christless, it is because his ear is attuned to heaven and he is getting his instructions from above. I remember reading, about forty years ago, a little poem that seems to me to bring out very precious what should characterize the spiritual man:

There is no glory halo around his devoted head,
No luster marks the sacred path in which his footsteps tread;
But holiness is graven upon his thoughtful brow,
And all his steps are ordered in the light of heaven e'en now.
He often is peculiar and oft misunderstood,
And yet his power is felt by both the evil and the good,
And he doth live in touch with heaven a life of faith and prayer,
His hope, his confidence, his joy, his all are centered there.

Would you like to be a spiritual man, a spiritual woman? If you would, there is a price to pay. You must surrender your own will, you must yield yourself unreservedly to the control of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. And that means the end of all human ambitions, that means that it makes no difference henceforth what men may think or say, you have only One to please, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a great deal of talk about surrender, about spirituality, on the part of Christians who manifest by their very demeanor the carnality that controls them. God give us to be controlled by Him!

Let us then as believers not be occupied with man but with Christ. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" And what are ministers? They are servants, and so God's ministers are servants of the people of God. Just imagine a family with a number of servants. Here is Chloe and Nellie and Tom and Bill, and the whole family is upset because some are saying, "I am of Chloe, I am of Nellie, I am of Tom, and I am of Bill." What, the whole family divided over the servants? What absurdity! God's ministers are the servants of the people of God; let them accept the service thankfully, but never let them put the servant in the place of the

Master. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." The servant has no power to cause the Word to produce fruit.

"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." The servant is nothing, but God is everything. "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one." And what is that? They are both just nothing; they are two ciphers. But put Christ in front of the ciphers and then you have something worthwhile. "And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."

LECTURE 9

THE TESTING OF THE BELIEVER'S WORKS

1 Corinthians 3:9–23

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this

world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. (vv. 9–23)

We have noticed how the apostle warns the people of God against putting His servants in a place that should belong only to the blessed Lord. Every minister is simply what that name implies, a servant, and the danger is that the servant will be exalted and the Master lost sight of, or the servant be so censored and blamed that the message will be refused and the Master dishonored. The servants in themselves are nothing but channels through whom God speaks to His people. The important thing is the message they bring. And so Paul speaks of himself and his fellow servants in this way: “We are labourers together with God.”

The wonderful thing is that God could do all His work without us. It is not necessary that He should take up any of us and use us to spread His gospel. He could write it in letters of fire upon the heavens, He could send angels of glory to preach the “unsearchable riches of Christ,” even as of old they came to proclaim the birth of Christ and to direct the shepherds to Bethlehem’s manger. But He has chosen to give to us the privilege of making known the riches of His grace, a holy privilege, and yet a very responsible one. It should lead every servant of Christ to ask himself, “Am I really in touch with God, am I seeking my own interests, can it be that I am actuated by selfish motives, by vain glory, simply trying to attract attention to myself and my ministry instead of taking a place like that of John the Baptist of old who pointed the people away from himself to Christ saying, ‘He must increase, but I must decrease’ (John 3:30)?” This was the attitude of Paul and this will be the attitude of every true minister of God. “We are labourers together with God.” They are not left to work in their own strength, but are to give out their message in dependence upon the indwelling Holy Spirit. That is the difference between preaching and worldly oratory. An orator may take a passage from the Bible and read it in a most thrilling way, but that would not be preaching, because he would not be doing it in the power of the Holy Spirit. A poor uneducated man may stand up and preach the gospel in halting English, and yet in such divine power that men would break before it and be led to confess their sins and trust the Savior. That is what He means when

he says, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). God's servants would preach better if you prayed for them more; there would be more response to the preaching if they were more upheld in the secret closet by the people of God. How the apostle felt his dependence on the prayers of God's people! You find him pleading with the saints to remember him in prayer that he might preach as he ought to preach. That is the petition that we bring to you, and we plead with you for Christ's sake and for the sake of dying men, bear up the ministry before God, take it daily to God in prayer that those who preach the Word may give it out in the demonstration of the Spirit and in power. "We are labourers together with God," and it is only as God works in and through us that anything is accomplished.

Then he turns to the servants as a whole and likens them to a field and a building. First we read, "Ye are God's husbandry"—or God's tilled field. You remember how the Lord Jesus Christ used that figure. The sower sows the Word and when the Word is sown and people believe it, He likens them to wheat in a field. That is a beautiful picture of His people, God's tilled field. One lovely thing about a field of wheat is that the heads are rising up toward the sun and they are very much on a level. We are all members one of another; one is not to tower above the other, but together we are to bring forth fruit to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, "Ye are God's building." The building is really the temple referred to in verse 16, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Of old when Solomon built the temple, he built it upon the solid rock of Mount Moriah. That was an oval-shaped hill and so it was necessary to make a level foundation. Vast stones were brought from the quarries below and thus made a great platform upon which the building stood, and so the apostle says, "Ye are God's building," God's temple. That is, the church of God collectively is the temple of God. He is not speaking of the individual now. In the sixth chapter and the nineteenth verse he says, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" That is another thing. In that sense you are a temple of God apart from every other believer, but here he is speaking of the assembly of God who as a whole constitute the temple of God, "The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder [or as a wise architect], I have laid the foundation." Just as that foundation had to be laid before the temple was erected, so Paul came to Corinth and there laid

the foundation by preaching the Word, and was used to bring the first members into the church of God in that locality. Very few of us can do foundation work like that in these days. Our missionaries have that privilege, they do not have to build upon another man's foundation, but with most of us the foundation has been laid, and so in the same way the foundation of the church in Corinth was laid when Paul first went there to labor. Now he says, "That foundation does not need to be laid again. Others build upon it—but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." In other words, they must preach the truth of God in the power of the Holy Spirit and not allow unscriptural and worldly and carnal things to come in to mar the work that the Spirit of God is doing.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." That word *precious* should be "costly," like the great and costly stones built into the temple of old. It is not the thought of diamonds and rubies, but great costly stones, built into the spiritual temple of the Lord. If unconverted, worldly, careless people are brought in, all these hurt and hinder the work of Christ; and so if you apply this to every individual believer, though primarily it has to do with building up the church through the servants of God, the same principle abides. You rest on the one foundation, Christ, and you are building a life, a character, that must stand the test of that coming day. How are you building and what are you building? You may build with gold which speaks of divine righteousness, silver which speaks of redemption, costly stones speaking of that which will abide the day of testing. Or, on the other hand, you may build with wood, hay, or stubble—wood, which may be fashioned to be very beautiful and has a certain value attached to it, but which will not stand the fire; hay, which is of less value than the wood and yet also has a certain measure of worth because containing nourishment; stubble, that which is utterly worthless, that which should have no place whatever in the thoughts of the people of God. How are you building?

God has undertaken for us so marvelously. We have often wondered what we were going to do, how we were ever going to get through, and yet God has brought us through, and we have found that a great deal we worried about we had better left with Him. Someone has said, "I have had a great many troubles in my life, but most of them never happened." God has been so gracious. Is this not a good time to look back and take stock? How have we been building? Everything that has been to the glory of God will be looked upon in that day as the gold that has His approval. Everything in our life that has been the result of our recognition of redemption, if we have acted as men and women redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, will shine out as silver in that day. Everything that has been in accor-

dance with the Word and has sprung from that renewed nature which we have through grace, will be as costly stones built into this edifice of our life. How have you been building? Do you see a great many things that give you pause? Do you say, "There has been so much selfishness, so much carnality, so much downright bad temper, so much just of the flesh and so much that was un-Christlike"? Then, dear believer, go to God and judge all these things in His presence, and they will be burned up now and you won't have to face them later. If you do not judge them now, you will have to face them at the judgment seat of Christ. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31). We are called to confess all these things that the Spirit shows us are just of the flesh.

A great deal that is called Christian work may be only the energy of the flesh. It is not done for the glory of God at all. What motives actuate us? How do we feel if others are preferred before us? This is a good way to test ourselves as to whether what we are doing is for the Lord. Only that which is done for Christ will be rewarded in that day. Notice, it is He Himself who will point out the differences.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest." This is at the judgment seat of Christ, not at the judgment of the Great White Throne. Believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ at the Lord's coming. "For the day [that is, the day of Christ] shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire"—the purging, testing fire of divine approval, discernment, righteousness; for He is going to judge everything by His standards, not by ours. "And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." I beg of you, consider that little word, *sort*. "Of what *sort* it is." Not how much it is. There may be much that amounts to very little in that day, but "of what *sort* it is." It is the character of our work that counts, the motives that lie behind our service. The secrets of the heart are to be made manifest. God will test everything in the light of His own truth. It is a great comfort sometimes when you cannot do all you would like to do to know that if it is of the right character, you will be rewarded just the same.

That is so lovely in connection with that dear woman who anointed the feet of the Lord. When others objected, Jesus said, "She hath done what she could." Is that what the Lord will be able to say of you in that day?—"He hath done what he could"—"she hath done what she could." And then, I do like that word that the Lord spake to David. Solomon tells how David wanted to build a temple to the Lord, but God did not allow him to do so, but the Lord said, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings 8:18). Possibly there is a sister who wanted to be a foreign missionary, but she lost her health and was not able to do so. She has been perhaps a semi-invalid at home for years, but has been able to write kind and helpful letters to those in distress. She gave of her slender means

to others to take the gospel to the ends of the world, yet she says, "I feel as though my life has amounted to so little; I wanted to be a missionary, and instead of that I have lived this humdrum existence." Do not be discouraged; if done for Christ, He will say, "She hath done what she could." "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." Perhaps there is a brother who as a young man thought, "How I would like to go into the ministry, how I would love to devote my life to proclaiming the gospel." But that necessitated study, years of preparation, and during those years when he would like to have gone to school perhaps he had a dear aged mother depending upon him, or a sick father, and he had to be the wage earner of the family. And so he has toiled on, labored on, helping to keep these dear ones, and many a time he has said, "Well, I have missed it; my life has not been the kind I wanted it to be; I wanted to be a minister of the gospel and here I have had to live in this matter-of-fact kind of way, handling butter and eggs, working in an office, or something like that." My dear brother, the Lord has taken note of all that self-denying care you have given that dear father or mother. He is not going to lose sight of any of it, and in that coming day He will say, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart," and will give you the same kind of a reward as you would have earned if you could have gone out and preached the gospel. It is the heart God looks at—"of what *sort* it is." God grant that our work may be of the right sort.

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." This is in addition to salvation. We are saved by grace, but this is for faithful service. After we have been saved, there is superabounding grace for, of course, the reward too is of grace, for we could not have earned anything but by divine power. He enables us and then rewards us. But, on the other hand, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss." What does that mean? Will I not feel unhappy even in heaven if I suffer loss in that day? You see, I will come before the Lord and He will go over my life from the day His grace saved me. It will pass like a panorama before me, and for everything that was the outworking of His Holy Spirit, for everything that was in accordance with His Word, He will give a reward. He will gather that which was for His glory together, and will say, "I am going to reward you for that." But He will bring everything to light which was of self, contrary to the Spirit of Christ, and say, "All that is just so much lost time. If you had devoted all that time to My glory, I could have rewarded you, but I cannot reward you for that which did not please Me. But I tell you what I am going to do with it, I am going to burn it up, and you will never hear of it again for all eternity." There will be nothing left but that which was to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Suppose that in that day I have really nothing to glorify Him, I have trusted Him as my Savior but my life seemingly amounted to nothing. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." You may have a beautiful home, you may have spent a long time in building it, but one day it takes fire, and you are wakened in the middle of the night to find the flames roaring through the halls. You leap out of the window and are saved, but the house is burned up. That is the way it will be for many a believer; the life will go for nothing, the life and testimony will be wasted, there will be no reward, but the individual believer will be saved yet so as by fire. Look at Lot. He spent years in Sodom building up a great reputation, he became a judge, but he had no business being there. We read: "That righteous man . . . in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (2 Peter 2:8), but Abraham's soul was not daily thus distressed. Why? Because he was not there at all, he was separated from it all. Finally God destroyed Sodom with fire and saved Lot. "Saved yet so as by fire." Everything he had lived for was burned up. Believer, what a solemn thing if that should be true of you or of me, when the blessed Lord takes account of our service.

The apostle goes to the farthest extreme here, but in the next chapter he shows that there will be no believer of whom that is actually true. Chapter 4 verse 5 reads: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." He will find something in every believer's life that He can reward, some little act of unselfishness, some trembling testimony for Himself, everything that was of the Spirit will be rewarded in that day. But he puts it in the third chapter in the strongest way that we may distinguish between salvation, which is of grace alone, and reward which is for service.

In the last part of the chapter he refers to another class. He has been speaking of members of the church of God, in the temple of God, some who build gold, silver, precious stones, and some who build wood, hay, and stubble. Now he speaks of a third class in verse 16, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" And then in verse 17, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Of whom is he speaking now? "If any man defile the temple of God"—those who are the enemies of God's truth, those who try to destroy His church, seek to ruin the work of the Lord, men from the outside who creep in. I tremble when I think of what it will mean for men who today profess to be servants of Christ and ministers of God but despise this Book and

deny every fundamental truth of Holy Scripture, and yet for filthy lucre's sake get into pulpits of orthodox churches, and instead of building gold, silver, or precious stones are only building wood, hay, and stubble, and they are destroying, as much as in them is, the temple of God. God says, "I will destroy them; they will have to account to Me by-and-by." I dwell upon this because some have misunderstood this passage and think of the temple as the temple of the human body; they have thought it might mean if somebody fell into some kind of habit that defiled the body it would mean that God would destroy him. If you allow yourself to indulge in any habit that injures this body, you will have to have answer for that, but here He is talking about the temple that is being built upon the one foundation, the church of the living God.

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." "The wisdom of this world," not the knowledge of this world. Knowledge is perfectly right and proper; gain all you can; but the wisdom, that is, the philosophy, the reasoning of this world, is foolishness with God. "For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Men may think they are very wise but God is ahead of them, and therefore because He has made foolish all the wisdom of this world, how absurd it is for Christians to glory in that which is just of man. "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours." Let me give you a title to a fortune. You are rich beyond your wildest dreams. Note carefully this closing passage.

"Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," the ministers of Christ, "or the world." Is the world mine? Yes, because, "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1). This is my Father's world. I can say, "Thank God, it all belongs to me, and I am going to reign over it someday." "Or life"—yes, life is mine in which to glorify God. "Or death"—death is the servant to usher me into the presence of the Lord. "Or things present"—they are all mine, the trials, the difficulties, the perplexities as well as the happy things. "Or things to come." What riches are soon to be revealed! "All are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." What a wonderful culmination to this chapter that emphasizes our responsibility!

LECTURE 10

STEWARDS OF THE DIVINE MYSTERIES

1 Corinthians 4:1–5

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. (vv. 1–5)

These words follow very naturally on what we have been looking at in the third chapter. The apostle has been seeking to put the servants of Christ in their right place before the minds of the saints in Corinth. There had been a tendency to factionalism and sectionalism, they were exalting certain leaders, and rallying round them, instead of recognizing that these leaders, evangelists,

pastors, teachers, were simply God-given servants for the blessing of the whole church. These servants of Christ are God's gift to the church for the blessing of the whole, whether Paul, the teacher, or Apollos, the eloquent preacher, or Cephas, the stirring exhorter. God has given all to His people for their blessing.

Now he turns to consider the responsibility of the servants of Christ and says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." We are inclined to go to one extreme or the other, either to laud and praise and overestimate the ability and character of God's servants, or else on the other hand to set them at naught and disdain the instruction and help God intended them to give. He would have us take the middle course, not to foolishly flatter His servants but to recognize that we have a great responsibility toward them as they seek to fulfill their responsibility toward us. They watch for our souls as those who must give account, and we are not to be angry or indignant if they have serious things to say to us at times concerning worldliness, carelessness, and carnality. We are rather to judge ourselves in the light of the Word of God, that they bring to us, for they are ministers of Christ. He does not use the ordinary word for "servant" which we find so frequently in his epistles, that is, "bond-servant," but here it is a word that has the thought of an official minister. They have been specially appointed to this particular service as ministers of Christ.

Notice, Paul links up with himself not only Cephas who was an apostle, but Apollos who was not. Apollos, that eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, who first went forth preaching the baptism of John, who was not above being instructed by a godly woman and her husband, Priscilla and Aquila, and went forth to preach the gospel with greater liberty and power when he learned it more fully. He says, "Do not put us on pedestals, do not form parties around us, but, 'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ.' We are sent with a commission from the Most High, sent to sound forth His Word, and we are responsible to do it faithfully. We are 'stewards of the mysteries of God.'" A steward is one to whom certain things are committed which he is to use for the benefit of others. God has committed His truth to us. Writing to Timothy, Paul says, "That good [deposit] which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1:14). And he was responsible to proclaim it faithfully.

We then are stewards of the divine mysteries. We have seen that the New Testament mysteries are not abstruse truths difficult to apprehend, but sacred secrets that had not been known in previous ages. In Deuteronomy 29:29 we hear Moses speaking to the people of Israel on the plains of Moab, just before

they went over the Jordan to take possession of the Promised Land. He says: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God." But when our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, He uttered "things that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world," and before He left His apostles He said: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:12-13). And so the present truth revealed by the Holy Spirit in our dispensation constitutes the mysteries, the sacred secrets, that the servants of God are now to make known. What are some of them?

We have the mystery of the gospel. And what is that? It is that grand, wondrous truth that the mind of man would never have ferreted out if God had not revealed it, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). It is that Christ upon the cross died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that having been delivered for our offences, He has been raised again for our justification; and now in resurrection life He sends the message out into all the world that he that "believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." This is God's great secret. Man never would have thought of it. I know that the gospel is from God for I am somewhat familiar with almost all the different religious systems that are prevalent in the world, and apart from that which is revealed in this Book not one of them ever intimates that God Himself should provide a righteousness for sinful man. They all demand a righteousness from man, but they simply point out different ways by which men are supposed to work out for themselves a righteousness that will make them fit for God. In the gospel alone we have the mystery explained how righteousness is provided for men who never could obtain it themselves. Our Lord Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, even righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and we are stewards of this great mystery.

Then we notice the mystery of godliness or piety, the great mystery of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus, God and Man here on earth in one Person. That is beyond human intelligence. We read, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." It is utterly impossible for men to understand the union of deity and humanity, and yet this mystery is plain to him that believeth. We simply accept the revelation that God has given and all questioning is at an end. People talk about "the problem of Christ." Christ is not a problem, He is the key to every problem. Everything else is made plain when we know Christ in whom dwelleth "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Paul opens up the great mystery of Christ and the church, set forth in two characters under the figure of a body and its head and that of a bride and a bridegroom. The Lord Jesus Christ glorified is the Head of the body, and every believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit is a member of that body and becomes thus the fullness of Him that fills all in all. In the other beautiful picture we are told that He who made them in the beginning made them male and female, and we read, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Paul says in speaking about the marriage relationship, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32).

Linked with this we have the mystery of the rapture; and that of the olive tree, Israel's present rejection and future regeneration. These various mysteries are the revelation to us of things kept secret from the foundation of the world. How few who take the place of being ministers of Christ ever unfold these mysteries, and yet this is the responsibility put upon Christ's servants.

"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." The business of a steward is not to electrify people by his eloquent sermons, not to dazzle them by his wonderful ability, not to please them by flowers of rhetoric, not to so speak that he will simply be to them as a "lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument" (Ezek. 33:32), as was said of Ezekiel, but the business of a servant of Christ is to open up the truth of God, to unfold, to expound, to make known these mysteries in order that the people of God may appreciate the heritage that He has given them in the Word. In fulfilling this ministry, the servant of Christ may be open to criticism, but that is a small thing. The apostle says, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self." In other words, as long as I am faithful in opening up the Word of God I am not concerned whether my sermons particularly appeal to you or not; as long as I know that I am pleasing Him that sent me I am not greatly concerned if I displease you. These Corinthians appreciated eloquence, oratory, and other special gifts, and they said of the apostle Paul, "Why, his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." But he could say, "Well, that doesn't trouble me at all. Did I give you God's truth? That is what I am concerned about. Your appraisal does not concern me in the least." "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment," or, as the margin puts it, "man's day." That is the entire period of time lasting from the rejection of Christ until He comes back again, while God is letting men try out one scheme after another to see what they can make of a world out of which they have cast the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Yea, I judge not mine own self.” I do not attempt to appraise my own service, I have no right to say, “Well, I think I did pretty well today; that was an excellent address.” That may be simply the pride of the natural heart. On the other hand I am not to go into a funk and throw myself down under a juniper tree, and say, “It was all a failure; I certainly did make a mess of things.” No servant of God is capable of appraising his own service. That which he might think to be excellent may be so much wasted time. That which he thinks wasted time may have just the message for the moment.

Then we read, “I know nothing by myself.” It is really, “I know nothing *against* myself.” I am not conscious of anything in my ministry of a harmful character. “Yet am I not hereby justified,” for I may be blundering even when I do not realize it. “But he that [appraiseth] me is the Lord.” He appraiseth everything rightly in accordance with His own holy Word.

He then warns the saints against attempting to get upon the judgment seat. It is not our place. “Therefore judge nothing before the time.” What time? The time when the Lord shall come. We have seen that when He returns He is going to carefully examine all the service of His people. He will separate the precious from the vile, He will distinguish between the gold, silver, and precious stones, and the wood, hay, and stubble. He will pronounce correct judgment upon the labors of His ministers. You and I cannot do that now, and it is better for us just to wait.

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” You see, that is what you and I cannot do; we can hear what comes from the lips or note the actions, but we do not know the hidden springs behind all this. But when the Lord Jesus examines all our labor, He will bring everything to light, all the hidden things of darkness. Yes, if there was envy and jealousy and pride and carnality, He will drag it all out into the light, and many a sermon that sounded very beautiful, that was almost perfect as a piece of oratory, will be shown to be utterly spoiled in that day by the pride that was behind it. He will bring out all these “hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” He will show where there was earnest preaching to glorify Him, even though the speech was faltering and the expressions used were not all they should have been. He looks upon the heart, not merely the outward appearance.

Then observe, he says: “Then shall every man,” and he is speaking of believers, “have praise of God.” But some people say, “Oh, dear, I can do so little and do not seem to have any gifts. I am afraid there won’t be anything the Lord can

reward me for in that day.” If you are in Christ, the Holy Spirit of God is dwelling in you, and in that coming day it will be made manifest that every Christian has accomplished something for God for which he can be rewarded.

At the close of a meeting a brother said to me, “Didn’t you go a little strong there?” I said, “No, I do not think I did.” “Well,” he said, “think of the dying thief, that man was saved just as he hung by the side of Christ; what opportunity did he have to do anything for which to get a reward?” “Why, my dear brother,” I said, “think of the dying thief again. There he hung nailed to a cross, he could not move a hand nor a foot, but he recognized in the Man on the central cross the coming King of the ages and said, ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,’ and he turned to his fellow and rebuked him and bore witness to the perfection of Christ and said, ‘We suffer justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss’ (Luke 23:41). At the judgment seat of Christ I think I see that redeemed man coming before his Lord, and he says to himself as he comes, ‘I was saved only a few minutes before my Savior died, and I have had no opportunity to serve Him, to witness for Him, I cannot expect any reward.’ And then I think I hear my Lord say, ‘Every one present who was converted through some sermon you heard about the dying thief, come here,’ and I imagine I see them coming until there are thousands and thousands of them, and I see my blessed Lord turn to that man and say, ‘I want to give you this crown of rejoicing for all these souls that you have helped to win to a knowledge of My salvation.’” Do you not see it? “Then shall every man have praise of God.”

LECTURE 11

TRUE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

1 Corinthians 4:6–16

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. I write not these things to shame you, but as

my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. (vv. 6–16)

Here we have the true apostolic succession. A great deal is said in certain circles about a ministry that can date back to the days of the apostles, the first followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby one clergyman after another, all down through the centuries, has received ordination first from the apostles and then their successors without a break to the present time. As though that in itself would confer any particular grace upon them! Undoubtedly Charles H. Spurgeon was right when he said, “When men count on receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands and because of any fancied apostolic succession, you can depend upon it, it is just a case of empty hands laid on empty heads.” Even if we could show an uninterrupted line from apostolic days in the present time there would be no merit in anything like that. But in these eleven verses we have emphasized for us true apostolic succession.

In the earlier part of the epistle the apostle warned against making overmuch of the servants of God. He told how in Corinth they were already divided into sections in the local church, some saying, “I am of Apollos,” some, “I am of Paul,” some, “I am of Cephas,” and some even making Christ’s name the head of a party, and boasting to be of Christ to the exclusion of others. “And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes.” That is, it may not actually have been his name or the name of Apollos or that of Cephas that was used in this sectarian way, but he put himself and Apollos, his fellow laborer, who was thoroughly of one mind with him, to the front and used their names as illustrations in order that he might reprove this tendency to sectarianism among the people of God. “That ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written.” You will notice that the words, “of men,” are italicized in the King James Version, which, I am sure you already know, means that there is nothing in the original that answers to those particular words. They were put there because the translators thought they were needed to help make clear the sense of the Greek text. It has been translated like this: “That you might learn in us nothing above that which is written.” That is, you are not to put men in such a place of authority that you rally to them and to their instruction, and are carried away with admiration for their abilities and forget that they as well as yourselves have to be tested by that which is written. The great question is, “What is written?” and the Bible is open to you just as it is to the learned

doctors and great commentators, and you need not, in this respect, that any man teach you, for the Holy Spirit will teach you concerning all things as you ponder over the Word of God. The reason why so many are constantly referring to the thoughts of others, men like themselves, is because there is so little real familiarity with the Book. "That you might learn," says the apostle, "in us nothing above that which is written." God has given His written Word, and outside of that the thoughts of even the best, the greatest teachers will be mere speculation.

God has not given teachers to the church in order that they may supplant the Bible and save His people the trouble of studying the Word for themselves, but that they may spur the people of God on to more intensive searching of the Scriptures. If men get occupied with teachers, they get puffed up one against another.

In verse 7 we learn that for Christians to attach themselves to certain gifts, to the neglect of others who may also have a special ministry from God, is to become very one-sided and to be only partially developed. Take for instance a Christian who says, "I am not interested in teaching, I like the preaching of the gospel. I like to go to an evangelistic meeting, but I am not interested in teaching." You will find that person is very easily carried away by all kinds of winds of doctrine. As long as there is plenty of emotional appeal, a great deal to enthuse and excite, they are there, but when there is something that necessitates thought and meditation, they are not interested. Such Christians lose a great deal. On the other hand, you will find other Christians who speak sneeringly and slightly of evangelistic efforts, of gospel preaching, and say, "I like to go to a meeting where some able teacher unfolds the Word of God, for that builds me up in Christ, but I am not interested when it is only the gospel." *Only* the gospel? The gospel is the most precious thing that I know anything about. It is the glad, glorious message of God's love to a needy world, a very rare jewel in these days. Somebody said to me recently, "How is it that one can wander about from church to church, and go Sunday after Sunday, and month after month, and never hear the gospel? It was such a refreshment to come in today and listen to the gospel." Oh, yes, some people who talk about, "only the gospel," had better try tramping about a bit to find out what is being preached. After you have sampled a lot of the rubbish that is going out in place of the gospel, perhaps you will have a higher opinion of gospel preaching. Another says, "Well, there is So-and-So, I like to hear him; he is an exhorter, and he always stirs me up, but I am not interested in dry teaching." Dry teaching! Teaching, of course, may be very dry if the power of the Holy Spirit is not manifested. But mere exhortation, if not backed up by the Book, will not accomplish very much. Yet exhortation is a gift given by the risen Christ to the church.

“Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” There is no reason for any servant of Christ to exalt himself over another. If one has a gift that God has given, he is to use that for the glory of God and not to attract attention to himself.

Then Paul turns to consider another phase of things. When people are not profiting by the ministry that God has given them, you can be sure that it is because of a low spiritual condition. We read in verse 8: “Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.” What does he mean? Why, these Corinthians were settling down to enjoy the benefits of the gospel without the self-denial that should go with it, and they were making themselves comfortable in the world. They received the good things that God’s servants brought to them, they congratulated themselves upon the fact that they were saved and going to heaven, and then settled down to enjoy the world, and Paul exclaimed, “You are reigning like kings now, before the time.” “Already,” he says, “ye are full, already ye are rich, already ye reign as kings.” We shall reign by-and-by, but the reigning time has not yet come. This is the suffering time. This is the time when we are to show our loyalty to Christ by our identification with Him in His rejection.

“I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death.” In other words, we are like men who are already under sentence of death and going out to die. On another occasion he said, “We have the sentence of death in ourselves” (2 Cor. 1:9). And so he went on in his devoted service. “For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle.” The word translated “spectacle” is *theatron*, that is where we get our English word *theater*. A theater is a show, something displayed upon the boards, and the apostle says, “We are made a spectacle, we are like performers on a stage, for others to look at and see in us something of the lowliness and gentleness and rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “We are made a spectacle unto the world,” and the word he uses for “world” is the word *kosmos*, the entire universe. “We are made a spectacle unto the universe, both to angels, and to men.” From heaven angels are looking down on the servants of Christ: here on earth men are looking at them. If they are proud and haughty and self-indulgent and self-seeking men, the hearts of angels are grieved and the hearts of men are filled with contempt. When they see lowly, devoted, Christlike, unworldly Christians, then angels rejoice and men recognize their reality.

I remember years ago when I was a young Salvation Army officer, our old colonel had called us in for what we called an Officers’ Council, and I shall never

forget his advice to us. He said, "Comrades, remember as you go about your work, men will forgive you if you are not eloquent, they will forgive you if you lack culture, if your educational privileges have been greatly curtailed, if you sometimes murder the king's English as you try to preach the gospel, but they will never forgive you if they find that you are not sincere." Men look for reality, and the Lord looks for reality in His servants, and so the apostle says, "We are like actors on the stage, and two worlds are looking upon us, angels and men, and we must do our part well to the glory of God."

Then he puts the apostles and these Corinthians in vivid contrast, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ." Notice the double contrast. Everywhere we go men brand us as fools. Why? Because we have given up earthly privileges, we have given up the opportunity of settling down comfortably here, in order that we might devote our lives to the gospel of God. And men say, "What fools they are!"

That is the way the world looks at it. The apostle says, "We are fools for Christ's sake." Notice the word, *for*, for I want you to see the contrast in the next clause: "We are fools for Christ's sake," we are throwing our lives away as the world looks at it; but you who are settling down making money, getting on in the world, having a comfortable time and saying, "We would not be so foolish as those others are," "Ye are wise in Christ." Do you notice that it does not say, "wise for Christ," but "wise in Christ"? They are real Christians and, as real Christians, were in Christ, and they fancied they were wise because they were holding on to a place and position in this world. He cannot say, "Ye are wise *for* Christ." The apostles who were accounted as fools for Christ were really wise *for* Him. And then he says, "We are weak, but ye are strong." Oh, the irony of all this! You fancy you are the strong ones and we are the weak because we give our lives to propagating the gospel. "Ye are honourable, but we are despised." Men look up to you for, "Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself" (Ps. 49:18), but we have given up everything for Christ's sake and of course we are despised.

In verses 11-13 he gives us an outline of what true apostolic testimony and experience really are. "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour, working with our own hands." The apostle was not one of these men who had such regard for "the cloth" that he could not dirty his fingers to take up some temporal occupation. When there were not sufficient funds to take care of his needs, he got a job making tents. He was simply a humble servant of Christ, and was not above anything that the Lord would have him put his hand to. "And

labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless.” It is not, “Being reviled, we give them as good as they give us,” but, “Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.” There is apostolic example. He did not look upon the service of Christ as something that introduced one into the first place in cultured society. To be a servant of Christ was to be misunderstood, rejected, it meant a path of self-denial all along the way; but now he says so tenderly, “I write not these things to shame you.” Why, then? To exercise them, to stir them up, to get them to realize how selfish their own lives were—“But as my beloved sons I warn you.” He is saying, “You are mine, I brought you to Christ, and I grieve when I see you are forfeiting future reward for present ease.” How often the servants of Christ are burdened like that and people do not understand.

You can take your choice. If you want to get a place and a position in the world and be thought well of down here, go on with the frivolity; but if you want to be thought well of up there, and want to be a Christian who will really count for God, then make a clean break with everything that would hinder fellowship with Him. You will get far more pleasure in a prayer meeting than in a frivolous social, once you get better acquainted with the Lord Jesus.

So the apostle says, as it were, “Ye are mine, my sons in the gospel, and I love you, and it is because I love you that I warn you that you will lose out by wasting your time in things that just appeal to the flesh when you might put in that time in self-denying service for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.” “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” He did not use the word which means “teacher.” They did not have many teachers; there are not a great many real teachers of the Word of God, and he is not slurring teachers as though their gift might be a very small thing, but he used the term from which we get our word, *pedagogue*, which means, “child-trainer.” There are ten thousand child-trainers but only one father. The child-trainer looked after the minor children, and he says, “You Corinthian babes, you have plenty of child-trainers, but only one father. I brought you to Christ, and I am your father in Christ.” How can you tell when people are still in spiritual babyhood? One thing is they cannot enjoy the deep things of God. “I have fed you with milk,” he says in another place, “and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (1 Cor. 3:2). I have known young Christians who, after being converted a number of years, say, “I am not interested in Bible lectures, they are too dry for me, I do not understand them. I like something simple,” and you get

the impression that they would like to lie down on a couch and have a nursing-bottle and a nipple on it, in order to suck down a little weak truth. Many of you ought to be teachers yourselves by this time and you are still just babies.

Another way you can tell them is by the things with which they play. Paul says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11). Many have been converted long enough to put away all childish things and get down to real business for God, but they are still spiritual babies. Some have been saved so long they ought to have a whole host of spiritual children, but they have never yet led one soul to Christ!

And then what a wonderful climax when he says, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." A man must live for God in order to speak like that, and the apostle could do it. He stood there before them and said, "I want your life to count well." They may have said, "But we do not know what to do." "Well then, imitate me. As an apostle for the Lord Jesus Christ I have counted everything loss for Him. My one desire is to glorify Him." In another place he says, "Follow me as I follow Christ." That is a safe thing, that is apostolic succession, and if you will follow that line, you will find apostolic blessing in your life and God will use you to win others to Christ.

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LECTURE 12

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

1 Corinthians 4:17–5:13

For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness? It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit,

with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. (4:17–5:13)

We have already noticed that this first epistle to the Corinthians is the charter of the church and that it brings before us certain divinely-given rules and regulations for the ordering of the local churches of God here on earth. This portion deals with the question of the discipline of an open offender against holiness and righteousness. The church is the house of God. When I use that word, I do not mean a building. God had one house made of stone and mortar, the temple at Jerusalem. He has never owned another. His present house is made of living stones, men and women built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. This is the house of God, the assembly of God, which is the church of the living God in this present age of grace; and holiness becomes God's house. He dwells in His church, that is, in the assembly of His saints, and therefore it must be a holy assembly. That is why again and again in the New Testament we are exhorted to absolute separation from the world and its ways.

Sometimes when those who watch for your souls seek to be very careful regarding worldliness and carnality and unholy things cropping out in the church of God, they are looked upon as censorious and harsh and possibly unkind, because they try to deal with matters of this character, and people fall back on a Scripture like this, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7:1–2). In these verses our Lord is speaking of the motives

of the heart. You have no right to judge my motives; I have no right to judge your motives. If I see one put a ten-dollar bill in the offering basket and I say to myself, "Oh, yes, he is just trying to be ostentatious, he did not give that out of real love for Christ," I am wrong, for I am judging one's motive, and I have no right to do that. This may apply to a thousand things. But the church of God is called upon to judge concerning the unrighteous behavior of any of its members. Verse 12 of chapter 5 says, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?" The world outside goes on its way and the church of God has no jurisdiction there.

The church of God is responsible as to the character of its fellowship, and it is responsible as to those who sit down together at the table of the Lord and are linked up in Christian service. Where there is failure, the individual who fails is responsible before God. It is a serious thing to profess to live the life that should characterize members of the church of God. Ours is a high and holy calling, and if we lower the standard, we are not only dishonoring Christ individually, but we are giving the wrong testimony to the world.

The story is told of a man who wanted to hire a coachman. He lived in a mountainous region and the road to his home ran along a precipice. A number of men applied for the position. He said to one of them, "Tell me, are you an adept at handling fractious horses?"

"Yes, I am," he said.

"Can you drive a six-horse team?"

"Yes."

"How near can you drive to the edge of the cliff without going over?"

"I have a steady hand and my eye is pretty true; I can get within a foot of it and not go over."

"You step outside," said the man, and he called another and asked him the same questions.

He said, "I am an expert in handling horses; I can drive right along the edge and not go over."

"Step outside," and he called another and asked the questions.

"If you want a man to drive on the edge of the precipice," said this man, "you do not want me. When I drive, I keep as far away from the edge as I can."

"You are the man I want. I will take you."

Christian, be careful of the edge of the precipice. Do not get near it, for the first thing you know you will go over, and this will mean not only the ruin of your own testimony, but the sad thing is, you are liable to drag others over with you. Keep away from the edge, and do not resent it if those who watch for your

souls as those who must give account try to impress upon you the solemnity of these things.

The apostle Paul had heard serious things concerning certain internal conditions in the church at Corinth, but he had been hindered from getting to them, and certain persons in the church who were carnally minded themselves and who knew that the apostle's coming would probably mean rebuking them for their worldly behavior were saying, "Paul is really afraid to come to Corinth, he knows he hasn't the influence he once had." But he says, "No, I am not afraid to come. Some of you are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power." In other words, when he should come (and he was speaking with apostolic authority), there were some things he was going to look into very carefully. He would find out whether the power of God was working in their lives or whether it was just bravado and conceit that led them to justify themselves. There is a tremendous lot of pretence among professing Christians: pretending to a piety that they do not possess, pretending to a devotedness that is not genuine. He would know not only the talk of their lips but would inquire into the behavior that characterized them. "For the kingdom of God is not in word," is not merely lip profession, "but in power," it is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the life.

The apostle says, "I want to come to you, but do you want me to come with a rod"—a rod of discipline? Did they want him to come as the representative of the Lord to chastise them for their bad behavior, or to come in the spirit of meekness so that they and he might sit down together over the Word of God and enjoy the precious things of Christ? If they desired him to come in this last way, there were some things to be settled first, and he told them what they were. "In the first place, it is reported commonly"—this was not merely a matter of some individual's gossip, it was widely known—"that you are tolerating one of the vilest forms of immorality that has ever been heard of even among the heathen Gentiles; it is known that one of your members actually has taken his father's wife (not of course his mother, but his stepmother) as his own wife. This is an abomination in the sight of God, but you have not recognized the wickedness of it. You have rather prided yourselves on the breadth and liberality that would enable you to go on with a thing like that. You are puffed up when you ought to be brokenhearted." "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." Even if they felt that they did not know how to handle a thing like this, they could have been down before God with breaking hearts crying to Him to undertake for them,

and He would have intervened and taken the wicked man from among them. But since he had received the evil report, as the representative of the Lord Jesus Christ he was going to tell them how to handle the situation, and in so doing he gave instruction concerning the handling of similar questions all down through the centuries.

“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already.” In other words, because we are all one in the Lord I have looked into this matter already, I have discerned, I have investigated and have the facts concerning him that has done this deed. This is the verdict, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power [or authority] of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan.” What does that mean? John says, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19), or, “in the wicked one.” This man was in the circle of those who are “of God.” Somebody might say, “The way to help him is to keep him in the circle, let him sit down with you at the Communion table; do not be hard on him, try to win him back, throw your arms of love about him and sympathize with him.” The unrepentant man will be more hardened in his iniquity if you do that. Put him outside in the Devil’s domain, let him know that he has forfeited all title to a place with the people of God—that he has been put back into the world where Satan rules. That is what he means when he says, “Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh.” What has caused all this trouble? The activity of the flesh. Very well, put him out in that sphere where he will find out that “it is an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the Lord his God.” When he finds himself abhorred by men and women who love Christ, when he finds his sin is a stench in the nostrils of Christian people, he may break before God. If, in spite of his sin, he has really been born again, he will break. If he has been a false professor, he will plunge deeper and deeper into evil things.

“Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” We do not like to carry out extreme commands like these, but this is the Word of God, and the greatest kindness that the people of God can do to a man who is deliberately going on in willful sin is to refuse Christian fellowship to him. As long as you treat him as a brother he will only be puffed up in his ungodly ways and it will be harder to reach him. But if you obey the Word, God will work toward his recovery and restoration.

“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” Housewives know that. What is the nature of leaven? You have a

great pan of dough and insert a little leaven, and if you leave it all night, the whole thing runs over on the table by morning. Very well, you allow one wicked man to go unrebuked and undealt with after the wickedness has been fully manifested, and the thing will go on like an infection working, working, working to the ruin of others and to the harm of the entire testimony.

The church of God is largely afraid to exercise discipline today, but where this is carried out in obedience to the Word of God the church is kept in a condition where God can work. The apostle was not acting upon mere hearsay, there was definite evidence as to the guilt of this man. The church of God is not to jump to conclusions. We are not to believe every scandal that people try to circulate. We have a rule, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:15-17). If he will not hear the church, he has to be put under discipline. If one knows of definite wickedness, he should go first to the guilty person and try to set it right. If he does not succeed, he is then to take another witness, but if he will not hear them, they are to take it to the church of God and be prepared to back up everything.

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." Before God the whole body is looked upon as unleavened, for "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." We are men and women who began with the blood of the cross. Like Israel in Egypt, when sheltered by the Passover, they were to put all leaven away. Leaven is the type of wickedness.

Leaven is mentioned in Galatians 5:9: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." There he is speaking of evil and unsound teaching which permeates and leavens the assembly of God. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," and if we have been redeemed by the precious blood it is incumbent upon us to recognize our responsibility to keep the feast, the feast of communion and fellowship with Him, not with old leaven, that is, the corruption of the old nature, nor with malice. Is there a child of God who is still tolerating un-judged malice in the heart? "Neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Our God looks for reality. It is not enough to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? . . . and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matt. 7:22). The great thing is for all who have been redeemed by His precious blood to manifest subjection to the Lord in the life.

In the concluding verses the apostle stresses the treatment that should be meted out to evildoers who have gotten into the church. You cannot discipline the world. He says, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters." If you should try to regulate all immorality in the world, you would have a tremendous job upon your hands, but here is the point: if a man who calls himself a brother is an immoral man or a covetous man—what is that? Does he couple covetousness with fornication? "The love of money is a root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10), and covetousness, reaching out and grasping for wealth, is just as vile a thing in God's sight as indulgence in unholy lust in other lines.

"If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer." What is a railer? It is a person who has a tongue loose at both ends and on a pivot in the middle, a vicious talker, an evil speaker, one who can destroy the reputation of another just as the murderer drives a dagger into the heart and destroys a life. A railer is a wicked person in the sight of God. "Oh," somebody says, "I don't mean any harm, but I am so careless with my tongue." What would you think of one who goes around with a machine gun and keeps firing away on this side and that, and someone says, "What are you doing?" "Oh," he replies, "I don't mean any harm, but I am so careless with this machine gun." A character assassin is as wicked in the sight of God as one who would take another's life.

"Or a drunkard." No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God. You young people in these vicious days in which we live, if you never want to be a drunkard, do not fall in with the current idea of thinking it is fashionable for everybody to drink a little bit. No man ever became a drunkard who was not first a moderate drinker. Somebody may say, "I do not believe in that; I can take a little and it does me no harm." But it may do your brother harm, and Paul said, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth" (1 Cor. 8:13). Here is God's standard. "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

An extortioner is one who squeezes the poor. Maybe he tries to cover up his sin in this way: he squeezes the poor and makes an extra thousand dollars, and then on Sunday comes down to the church and says, "I want to give you a hundred dollars for missions." God says, "Keep your dirty money, you got it in the wrong way." God wants holy money to use in holy service. An extortioner is a wicked person and God says, "With such an one no not to eat." You are not to

sit down to the table with such an one. That would cut down our dinner parties considerably, and I take it that he also includes the Lord's table. People should be warned to stay away from the Lord's table if living as depicted here.

"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?" Outside in the world God judges, He will deal with them in due time, but He calls upon the church of God to maintain careful discipline over its members for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. His good name is at stake. People say, "What! Is that one of your Christians? Does that person belong to Christ and do thus and so?" That is one reason why the church of God is responsible to maintain holiness as it goes on through the world.

And now the concluding word: "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Of course there is a great deal of other instruction in Scripture for discipline, as in the case of a brother overtaken in a fault, and the Word says, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Every effort should first be made to restore the wanderer, but if he will not be restored, if he persists in his sin, if he goes on defying the discipline of the church of God, then the time comes when the Word has to be acted on: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Perhaps some of you feel like saying what one of the Hopi Indians said to me one time after I had tried to put before them the responsibility of a Christian. They had a rather peculiar name for me; it was, "The Man with the Iron Voice"; and he said, "Man with the Iron Voice, you have made the way very hard today. I thought I was saved by grace alone, but now it looks as though I have to walk to heaven on the edge of a razor." We are saved by grace alone, but we are called to walk in holiness, and while we have no ability to do it ourselves, the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in every believer and He is the power of the new life. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit, and we will be enabled thus to honor the Lord Jesus Christ by holy, unworldly, devoted, godly lives.

LECTURE 13

ON GOING TO LAW

1 Corinthians 6:1–11

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of

justification, but he said, "No, we have been wrongfully accused and unjustly treated. You admit you have made a mistake; make the admission publicly." That was perfectly right and proper.

But here is an entirely different case. Now we have brethren dragging each other before the world's courts. He says, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" If Christians have disagreements which they are not able to iron out between themselves, let them consult their brethren, bring in others in whom they have confidence, and let them agree to abide by their brethren's judgment just as truly as they would have to abide by a decision from a worldly court.

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" This refers to something that many Christians have lost sight of. Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again to reign for a thousand wonderful years. Then judgment shall return to righteousness, and when He reigns we shall reign with Him. It is written, "The time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan. 7:22). If we are going to reign with Christ, going to sit on thrones of judgment with Him in that coming glorious kingdom age, what an absurd thing to think that we are not fit to judge matters having to do with temporalities here on earth when our brethren are in difficulty.

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" After all, these things are so trivial; matters of money, of property, matters concerning personal reputation, are such small things when viewed in the light of eternity. We may make a great deal of them, we may magnify them and give them a place of importance altogether beyond that which they deserve, but the apostle declares they are very small matters indeed, and he strengthens his position as he adds, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" What is that? Angels who are greater in power and might, are we going to sit in judgment upon them? Are angels coming into judgment? Yes, we read twice in the New Testament of angels coming into judgment. In 2 Peter 2:4 we read, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment," and then certain conclusions follow. Then in the epistle of Jude, verse 6, we read, "And the angels which kept not their first estate [their own principality], but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Now it is the final judgment that is in view, and at that last great assize these fallen angels shall be all brought into judgment. And who will sit upon that throne of judgment? Our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the redeemed throughout the ages will be associ-

cleared, it is not necessary that you should always prove that you have been wronged in matters of this kind. You can, if you will, bow your head and say, "I leave all with God. I am not going to say anything about it; if they wrong me, He understands."

Many years ago as a little fellow I attended a meeting in Toronto where some difficulty had come up between brethren and they did as the apostle suggests. My dear mother took me along. "Little pitchers have big ears," and I well remember how horrified I was to see men I esteemed and had been taught to respect apparently so indignant with each other. I can remember one man springing to his feet and with clenched fists saying, "I will put up with a good deal, but one thing I will not put up with, I will not allow you to put anything over on me; I will have my rights!" An old Scotch brother who was rather hard of hearing leaned forward holding his ear and said, "What was that, brother? I did not get that!" "I say, I will have my rights," said the man. "But you did not mean that, did you? Your rights? If ye had your rights, you would be in hell, wouldn't you? And you are forgetting—aren't you?—that Jesus did not come to get His rights, He came to get His wrongs, and He got them." I can still see that man standing there for a moment like one transfixed, and then the tears broke from his eyes and he said, "Brethren, I have been all wrong. Handle the case as you think best," and he sat down and put his face in his hands and sobbed before the Lord, and everything was settled in three minutes. When in this spirit it is so easy to clear things up; when we bow before the Lord, He straightens them out.

And then think of what grace has already done for you. Think how marvelously God has dealt with you in spite of all the sin and iniquity that you have been guilty of in the past. In the next verse he reminds them that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and then he sets forth a fearful catalogue of sins and transgressions against God, nature, and man, and as he repeats this awful list, he turns to that redeemed company and says, "And such were some of you." These are the things from which you have been saved, these are the transgressions that have been forgiven you, from these unholy, wicked, impure things you have been cleansed. You were sinners' of five hundred pence, but God has forgiven all. Shall you hold your brother accountable because he owes you a small debt when God has so graciously dealt with you?

"Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Notice the order here: "washed—sanctified—justified." I went into a mission in San Francisco years ago and sat for perhaps half-an-hour listening to marvelous testimonies of redeeming grace. One after another rose and painted a dreadful picture

of his past life and then told how God had saved him. I had come to that meeting with a little sermon all made up, but as I sat listening to these testimonies, I said, "O dear, my stupid little sermon! To think I imagined I could go into my study and develop a little discourse that would suit a congregation like this, when I had no idea of the kind of people I was going to address." So I just "canned" my sermon; I put it out of my mind, and when I rose to speak, I took this text: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." It was easy to preach to them then without a lot of study. These sermons that you get up are so hard to preach, but those that come down are so much easier. At the close a dignified personage came to me and said, "Do you know, you got your theology terribly mixed tonight?"

"Did I?" I said. "Straighten me out."

"You put sanctification before justification. You have to be justified and then you get the second blessing."

"Pardon me, but you are mistaken," I said. "I did not put sanctification before justification."

"You most certainly did."

"I most certainly did not; it was the apostle Paul who did."

"Why, you cannot blame your wrong theology on him."

"I was simply quoting Scripture."

"You misquoted it. It reads, 'Ye are justified, ye are sanctified.'"

"No, no," I said; "read it."

And he began to read, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified," and then he said, "Why, there is a misprint there. Wait a minute; I will get a Revised Bible."

He got it and looked at it, and read, "Washed, sanctified, justified."

"Why," he said, "I never saw that before; but all I have to say is the apostle Paul was not clear on the holiness question when he wrote that!"

But what does the apostle really say? "Ye are washed." What does that mean? It is the washing of regeneration. When the Word of God is applied to the heart and conscience, when first awakened and turned to the Lord, it results in deliverance from the impurity of the old life. We are cleansed by the washing of water by the Word.

"But ye are sanctified." What is it to be sanctified? It is to be set apart to God in Christ, and that is true of everyone who turns to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a work that begins even before a man is conscious of his justification. Were it not for that, not one of us would ever turn to Christ. The Spirit begins that work

which exercises and convicts and leads us to feel our need, and through the Word we are washed and cleansed, and thus Christ is revealed to our souls, and putting our trust in Him we are justified from all things.

Washed—that has to do with the practical cleansing. *Sanctified*—set apart to God in Christ. *Justified*—that means we are judicially cleared before the throne of God. God has nothing against the man who stands justified before Him. These are our blessings, they are true of every believer. How our hearts ought to thrill with worship and praise as we think how God has dealt with us!

LECTURE 14

THE BELIEVER'S BODY: THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (vv. 12–20)

Following what we have seen in the early part of this chapter as to the believer's cleansing, sanctification, and justification in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, we are now asked to consider some of the practical results of all this. If we have been redeemed to God by the precious blood of His beloved Son, if we have been regenerated by the Word and the Holy Spirit, then we are no longer to live to please ourselves but the One who has made us His own at such a cost. And so the apostle stresses particularly the importance of recognizing our bodies as belonging to our risen Lord.

The honor of the body was never really revealed until our Lord Jesus Christ came. If you are at all familiar with the different heathen philosophies and pagan religions, you know that men as a rule distinguish between the inner man and his relation to God and the body and its relation to earth. A great many of these philosophers and teachers said, "It does not make any difference to what use you put the body. It is merely physical, and when you die it is gone. Even though your soul may persist after death the body will never rise again, and it is impossible to defile the soul by anything you may do with the body." That was the very essence of the philosophy that was taught in Corinth where the apostle had been used of God for the calling out of this company of redeemed ones whom he addresses as "the church of God," and therefore, there was very grave danger that they might bring over to the new Christian position some of the old pagan conceptions, and in that way fail to appreciate the holiness, the purity, that should be connected with the physical life of the believer as well as with his spiritual life.

The apostle shows that the believer has not come into any legal relationship with God. He is not under law; he has marvelous liberty, but not liberty to do wrong. He must distinguish between license and liberty. An instructed believer will never say, "I am in Christ, and it does not make much difference what I do." A man who talks like that shows that he has never apprehended the reality of what "in Christ" means. The very fact that I am in Christ means that God has claims upon me that He did not assert when I belonged to the world. Then I was allowed to take my own way, but now that I am in Christ I am called upon to present my body, not merely my spirit, as a "living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). And so He tells us here, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient," or befitting. If it is just a question of law, I am not under law but under grace. But on the other hand, there are many things that are utterly unsuited to a Christian; things that would bring my testimony into disrepute. There are a great many things about which there is no direct instruction in the Word of God, and because of this some think of them as things indifferent. But the question is, "What

effect would it have on other people if I as a Christian were to indulge in them?" I belong to Christ, and men will judge of Christ as they look upon me, and my behavior therefore must be such as will commend Christ. And then again, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." It is an answer to those who say, "Well, why should not a Christian feel perfectly free to indulge himself if he wants to?" And so they excuse the use of intoxicants and tobacco. It is a bad thing to create habits that are not easily broken, and the apostle says, "I will not be brought under the power of any." I will not allow myself to be a slave to appetite. There are things with which one cannot tamper without being brought under their power. Your liberty is gone when you say, "I have liberty to form habits like this," for you become a slave.

You can apply this in a great many different ways. "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." I am the Lord's free man, and I am going to preserve my liberty in Christ. I am free to please Him, not free to please myself. And then if it is a question of food, we read: "The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty" (Prov. 23:21). Notice, it is not only the drunkard but also the glutton. In their heathen festivals the people gorged themselves in the most disgusting way in honor of their heathen gods, and we as Christians need to be careful as to overeating. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats." The two are suited the one to the other. Food is suited to the digestive tract and the digestive tract is suited to food, but you are not to live for these things, you are not to live to feed the belly. "But God shall destroy both it and them." Do not live therefore as though your great business in life was the gratifying of your appetite. Let there be something higher before you. As Christians your business is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then he speaks of the sex instinct, for there were those who said, "God has implanted certain appetites in the very bodies of men and women, therefore it does not make any difference how people indulge these appetites in or out of the marriage relationship." "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." It is not to be used for vile gratification, that is contrary to the holiness of God, but it is to be kept for the Lord, and as it is kept for the Lord, the Lord is for the body. What a wonderful relationship we have been brought into. It is the resurrection of the body of the Lord Jesus that has put dignity upon all our bodies. If I am going to have my body in resurrection, then I must remember it is not to be used for any degrading purpose here on earth.

"God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" You know that your spirit is a member of Christ, you know your soul belongs to Christ,

but do you think as often as you should of the fact that your body is a member of Christ? We read of the church as the body of Christ. It is not merely as an aggregation of redeemed souls that the church is the body of Christ, but as men and women having physical constitutions we belong to Christ, and my body is to manifest the holiness of Christ, my body is to be used in devotion to Him. I am to present my body as a “living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto the Lord,” as already intimated.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” Very well, shall I take the members of Christ, this body of mine, and defile it, put it to an unholy purpose? How can I do that, I who profess to have been bought with the blood of God’s dear Son? “Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” What a mystic union this is into which we have been brought! The same Holy Spirit who dwells without measure in the Head now dwells in every member of Christ’s body here on earth. Then, the body is for the Lord. How this will solve every problem in regard to sensual pleasure and worldly folly. You are invited out somewhere where you are not quite sure you can glorify God, and you stop a moment and say, “My body is a member of Christ; is it consistent for me, as a member of Christ, to go where He will be dishonored?” You must not go where you cannot glorify Christ. That is the Christian standard.

“He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” Then I must flee everything that is of a carnal, corrupt nature. “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body.” Other sins do not affect the body, but this one sin is ruinous to body and soul alike, and so, Paul says, “Flee fornication,” run from anything that would tend to stir the body to unholy lust. In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine tells how in his unconverted days he had allowed himself to become the willing victim of vile and fleshly lusts. He lived his careless life as the pagans of that day, and associated with the corrupt and wicked members of society. When he got converted, the great question upon his mind was this, “Will I ever be able to live according to the Christian standard of holiness, will I ever be able to keep myself from the vile, sensuous life in which I have lived so long?” When he first yielded himself to Christ, he took as his life-text Romans 13:13–14, where the apostle exhorts the believer to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. For long after his conversion he did not dare even to go near that part of the city where his godless companions of former days lived. But one day a matter of business called him there, and as he

was walking along the street he suddenly saw one of the beautiful yet wicked companions of his folly. The moment her eyes lit upon him her face was illuminated with delight, and she came running with outstretched arms and said, "Austin! where have you been for so long? We have missed you so," and he turned and gathered up his long philosopher's gown and started to run. It was not a very dignified proceeding for a doctor, a professor of rhetoric, to run up the street with a godless girl running after him. She called to him, "Austin, Austin, why do you run? It is only I!" He looked back and exclaimed, "I run because it is not I." And he was off again. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). That is our standard, and so in all our behavior in the use of the body we are thus to glorify Him.

Now he comes to the crux of the whole matter. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple [the sanctuary] of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" See how the Holy Spirit links us again with Christ. When He was here on earth, He said to the Jews of His day, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19), and they, misunderstanding, looked at the great temple on Mount Moriah and said, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" But we are told, "He spake of the temple of his body." He, the Holy One, had a real human body, and that body was the sanctuary of deity. Now He has gone back to heaven, He has saved our souls, and He claims our bodies and has sent His Holy Spirit down to dwell in the body of the believer. He says, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." Do we think as much of this as we should? Would you allow many things about which you are careless if that were constantly before your mind? You think of a church building as a sanctuary set apart for the work of the Lord. You step in from the outside, and immediately your hat comes off, for you realize that you are in the sanctuary. We teach our boys and girls not to be boisterous or frivolous in the church building for it is the house where we meet with God, and we realize that reverent behavior should characterize us. But think of this, your body is the sanctuary, it is the temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells. How careful you and I ought to be that we grieve not that blessed One who dwells within, that we do not bring dishonor upon the name of the Savior who has sent His Spirit to live in our body. Say the words over and over again to yourself until they get such a grip on you that you will never forget them: "My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God dwells in me." It will give you to realize the dignity of the body and the responsibility that attaches to it.

"Ye are not your own?" Does your heart respond to that? "Ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price." And what price? The precious blood of

God's dear Son. Yonder at Calvary He purchased us to be His own. An old Puritan writer said, "Calvary was the marketplace where the Savior bought us with His blood, but He never got His money's worth." We have been such poor servants, we have responded so poorly to His love. We used to sing years ago:

Not my own, but saved by Jesus,
 Who redeemed me by His blood,
 Gladly I accept the message,
 I belong to Christ the Lord.

Not my own, to Christ my Saviour
 I believing trust my soul,
 Everything to Him committed,
 While eternal ages roll.

Not my own, my time, my talents,
 Freely all to Christ I bring,
 To be used in joyful service
 For the glory of my King.

Not my own, the Lord accepts me,
 One among the ransomed throng
 Who in heaven shall see His glory,
 And to Jesus Christ belong.

It will be wonderful to be His own up there. I would not want to miss it then, but it is a greater privilege to be His own as we walk the streets of this world than it will be when we walk the streets of gold, for this is the world in which we have the privilege of glorifying Him in our bodies. And so he says, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." If you have the Revised Version, you will see that the text really stops here. In our King James Version it adds the words: "And in your spirit, which are God's." I think somebody making a copy of this in the old Greek text got down this far and had not got the thought at all, but felt that there was something left out and so added these words in the margin. That is the very thing the apostle is not saying. What he is saying is, "Keep to this thought; your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; if you glorify Him in your body, you will in your spirit." Glorify God in your body and the spiritual side will take care of itself.

LECTURE 15

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

1 Corinthians 7:1–17

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let

not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. (vv. 1–17)

This seventh chapter deals with a subject that has caused a great deal of confusion down through the centuries. The marriage relationship occupies a large place in the Word of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New. The teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and the direct ministry of the Holy Spirit after our Lord's ascension puts this whole matter on a very high plane, so that marriage for a Christian becomes God's own wonderful picture of "the mystic union," as we often say in the marriage ceremony, "that subsists between Christ and the church." We can quite understand that in the early church there were a great many irregularities to be corrected in regard to this entire subject. There was a certain laxity permitted in Israel under the law which our Lord Jesus Christ forbade in the dispensation of grace. Then again in the heathen world around conditions were such that it was probably a difficult thing to find persons whose attitude in regard to marriage was at all like that of the New Testament church. Therefore, there was of necessity very plain speaking.

In the first part of this chapter the apostle is evidently dealing with questions that have been propounded to him and says, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman." People have drawn from this that the apostle was an advocate of celibacy, and the Roman church is very fond of pointing to this verse as though it taught that the unmarried monk or priest or the unwedded nun is a holier person just because of their state and condition in regard to this matter than the Christian husband or wife, father or mother. The apostle does not say that; but he speaks of serving the

Lord without distraction particularly in a time of persecution, and this passage does refer to such a time. Farther on he says, "It is good for the present distress." He wrote in a day when to become a Christian, to be publicly baptized as confessing Christ, meant to put one's very life in jeopardy. Under such conditions it might really be best that a man should not be married at all. Yet he recognized certain inherited tendencies of human nature which might make such a condition a very dangerous one and might work against purity, against the highest type of morality, instead of working for greater holiness, and so says, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." He stresses the mutual relationship of each to the other. The husband is to "render unto the wife due benevolence." As the apostle Peter very beautifully puts it, "giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7), and the wife on her part is to see that she reverences her husband. They are to remember that having entered into this relationship neither is any longer his or her own master, but they have agreed to subject themselves one to another, and there can be no happy Christian home unless that is recognized.

"The wife," he tells us, "hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife." And so they are to be sure that they pay due regard to one another's conjugal rights. There may be circumstances when they might draw apart from each other, they might separate the one from the other for a limited time, but let them be careful not to do so, "Except it be with consent [by mutual agreement] for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." All down through the Christian dispensation there have been sects and strange teachers who have advocated the celibate condition even for persons already entered into the marriage relationship, and have sought to inculcate the idea that in order to serve the Lord better husbands and wives should live entirely apart one from the other. The apostle says that to attempt such a life as that is only to place yourself in a position of great temptation, and therefore is not only unwise but is thoroughly opposed to the divine institution of marriage. But if husband or wife say, "We think it would be best that we dwell apart from each other for a little time that we may be more entirely devoted to the Lord, that we might wait upon Him in fasting and prayer to be more fully conformed to His image, and come together again," very good, but let them be careful that they do not run off into some strange inconsistency if they attempt this.

"I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." Some people have pointed to this verse and said, "You see, the apostle himself does not always

claim to be inspired. In this portion he declares that he is speaking only by permission and not commandment, and therefore he was not inspired of God." Oh, no, he is just as truly inspired to give this permission as he is a little farther on to give a direct command. But what may be permitted in one family might throw another family into hopeless confusion. Here is a family with a number of little children, and the wife gets a high notion of the demands of personal holiness and comes to her husband and says, "My dear, I want to be altogether for God, and so I am going to request that I separate entirely from you for a time. I am going to some spiritual retreat. You get along with the children as best you can!" It would throw the entire family into confusion. She would glorify the Lord better by looking after the children than by spending the time on her knees in some retreat, just as many a Christian today would glorify God far better looking after the growing children at home than being at a meeting every night.

Let us not forget that God established the home before He created the church, and when people are married they have a tremendous responsibility resting upon them. No one feels that more keenly than one who, like myself, is separated to the gospel of God. I do not know how often I have felt like crying out with the bride in the Canticles, "They made me the keeper of the vineyard, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." It is one of the difficult things for a servant of Christ called to travel through the world with the gospel message to give the time he should give in training his children in the fear of God, but where people do not have such a calling they should be especially concerned about their responsibility in the home. I think God must have some special place in heaven for preachers' wives. They have had so much more to contend with than the average woman. If the children go wrong, folks wag their heads and say, "Queer kind of a mother." Probably the trouble was that the father was not able to cooperate with her more, and the children may have stepped to one side. And yet how God honors preachers' wives. Somebody said that preachers' children are always the worst. I cannot boast of my own, though I do thank God for saving them all. But you will find that some of the greatest names on the pages of history are preachers' children. In 2 Chronicles where the kings of Israel and Judah are given, when you read of a man being especially willful or especially good, you read, "His mother's name was so and so." Sad indeed when a child has an evil mother! Then you can scarcely expect much good from him.

The household, you see, might be thrown into hopeless confusion if husband and wife were to separate one from the other, but in other households such times of retirement may be arranged. And so the apostle does not mean that he is not inspired when he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment,"

but he does mean that the Spirit of God allowed him to give them this permission but not to command them. It is nowhere commanded that husband and wife should for any time separate from each other.

And then Paul says, "I would that all men were even as I myself." For the gospel's sake he chose to remain unmarried, and in circumstances such as many were passing through, the single state was to be preferred, other things being equal.

Having once entered into the marriage relationship he says in verse 10: "Unto the married I command [now we have not merely permission but commandment], yet not I, but the Lord." What does he mean by that? Simply this, he was just repeating something that the Lord has already said unto the married. He was reminding them of what the Lord has already said in Matthew 5:31-32: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Those are the solemn words of the Lord Jesus. In the nineteenth chapter of the same gospel, he gives just one change which permits the innocent party in a divorce to marry again according to Scripture. There we read: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:5-6). I have heard people try to get around that by subterfuge and say, "I don't believe the Lord joined us together; I think the Devil did it; and therefore, I think we are free to get a divorce and marry somebody else."

God pronounced the words in the garden of Eden, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). It is He who joins people together in the marriage relationship, and once joined in that relationship they should never break it.

"They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" (Matt. 19:7). In the law of Moses this was permitted. In a hard, rough age when men were often very uncouth and cruel, God commanded that instead of holding a wife who was disliked and hated as a kind of slave or chattel, she should be given a writing of divorce and permitted to go home to her people. But now under the dispensation of grace when men are born again and transformed by the Spirit of God, no such thing is tolerated. "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever

shall put away his wife [now observe], *except* it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (vv. 8–9). Notice, there is a sin which dissolves the marriage relationship and if one partner is guilty of that sin, he may be put away and the other party is free, and if married again, the new marriage is not called adultery. There are those who are so legal that they refuse to take note of that “except,” but the Son of God has put it there in order that the innocent party may not have the onus of immorality on him or her. There you have the New Testament standard given by the Lord Himself.

“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband.” But he immediately adds, “But and if she depart.” What is implied there? There may be circumstances where no self-respecting woman could continue in the marriage relationship with some man, there may be circumstances where a man is so absolutely brutal or so vile and filthy and perverted in his whole character, that no decent, good woman could live with him, and in that case it is evident from this that she is free to leave him but not to be divorced and remarried unless she has definite New Testament ground for it. “If she depart, let her remain unmarried.” Circumstances may make it necessary for her to leave, but if so, let her remain unmarried. “And let not the husband put away his wife.” If she is obliged thus to leave a brutal man, she can at least continue to remember him before God in prayer and it may be that through her prayers the day will come when he will be broken down by divine grace and saved. If that day comes, and he beseeches her now to return to him, she can go back to find him a new man, and make a home for him once more, but if she has already entered into another relationship, think of the pitiable condition she would be in.

“But to the rest speak I, not the Lord.” Is he not speaking by inspiration? Keep in mind the whole argument. “Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord.” The Lord has already spoken in this matter. Then he says, “To the rest speak I, not the Lord.” The Lord has not already spoken, but Paul speaks now by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and he is laying down a divine principle in regard to a matter on which the Lord had not already legislated. “If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.” This did not come up in the Lord’s time on earth for He came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now Paul is speaking to Gentiles, and it was a common thing for one member of the family to be converted and the others not. Think of a case where a man in Corinth has been saved but his wife is a devotee of the heathen cults and is indignant that he no longer burns incense to

these idols, and yet she is willing to live with him. "Let him not put her away." He is not to assume self-righteous ground and say, "I am a Christian and cannot acknowledge you as my wife any longer."

In Israel if a Jew were married to a pagan, he had to put her away, she was unclean in the sight of God. But under grace if a pagan wife is pleased to dwell with her Christian husband, let him show her all due kindness and consideration and seek to be a blessing to her. And if it is the case of a woman who has been converted, we read, "And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." If you turn to the last chapter of Ezra, you will find that in Israel many Jews had entered into alliances with women from among the heathen, and there were many children speaking half in the language of Ashdod and the other half in the language of Israel. When the husband is a Christian and the wife is not, the children will generally speak half in the language of heaven and half in the language of earth. It is a difficult thing to bring them up for God in a mixed home like that. He said, "You will have to put all these wives and children away as unclean." But notice the difference in grace. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife." He may be hard, he may be wicked, he may hate the very name of Jesus, but he has been brought outwardly into a new relationship with God through the conversion of his wife. There is now somebody in that home to pray, somebody who loves the Word of God, somebody to live the Christian life, and let the others see what it means to be regenerated. I may be addressing wives who are breaking their hearts over unsaved husbands. Will you not take comfort from this, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife"? Or I may be addressing husbands who are grieved because the wives that they love are still out of Christ. You too may be comforted, for "the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband." Keep on praying, keep on bearing them up before God, believing that if He has saved you out of an unconverted family, it is because He wants the whole household for Himself. That is what is indicated when the pagan jailer cried, "What must I do to be saved?" and the answer came ringing and clear, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*" (Acts 16:31). In other words, God is saying, "Jailer, I not only want you, I not only want to cleanse your heart, but I want to make your household a Christian one, a testimony to My grace right there in Philippi," and so it came to pass. So keep on praying. And your children are sanctified because they have a father or a mother, as the case may be, to take them to God in prayer and to teach them

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the Word of God, and you can count on Him to bless that ministry to them by bringing them eventually to Christ.

But, next, we may suppose a case where the unsaved one will not remain. Very well, "If the unbelieving depart, let him depart." You cannot do anything about it. "A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases." But then, you see, you live your own life in widowhood to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Do not look around for another mate. If the unbelieving depart, then you devote yourself to Christ and His glory and keep on praying for the wandering one, for "God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" Even though he is gone, even though he has left the home, keep on praying for him, for how do you know when God may intervene and bring him back penitent and brokenhearted to try to make up for the willfulness of the past by living a kindly devoted life with you. Farther on we read, "How knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" She has gone because you love Jesus and she does not. Do not be too hard in your thoughts, pray and ask yourself, "Was there something in me that should have been different that turned her away? If I had a little more grace and Christlikeness, might she have remained?" Bear her up before God, and if the day comes that she is ready to return, receive her as God receives His erring ones when they come back to Him.

"But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches." These are not just matters with which we may play fast and loose. If you are a Christian and a member of a Christian church, these are divine requirements concerning the marriage relationship ordained for all the churches.

Why is God so insistent about this? Because from the beginning it was His thought that the marriage relationship should set forth the union between Christ and His redeemed, and when people are married they take each other for life. Many of you remember when you stood before the minister and he said, "Do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife? Will you love, honor, and cherish her so long as you both shall live?" and you said, "I will." Have you lived up to it? And you remember when he said to the woman, "Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband? Will you love, honor, and obey him so long as you both shall live?" and you answered, "I will." Does your conscience tell you that you have been true to that vow? You entered into a relationship that day that pictures the relationship between the soul and the Savior. Away back in the Old Testament when Rebecca had become the affianced wife of Isaac, they thought she should not leave her home immediately and so decided to call her

and see what she had to say about it. They put the question, "Wilt thou go with this man?" and without a moment's hesitation she answered, "I will go," and she went across the desert to be united to Isaac.

Unsaved one, my blessed Lord has sent me to you with a message of His love and kindness. He wants you to enter into an eternal union with Himself. Wilt thou go with this Man, the Man Christ Jesus?

LECTURE 16

THE TIME IS SHORT

1 Corinthians 7:18–40

Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it

remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better. The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God. (vv. 18–40)

In the earlier portion of this chapter the apostle, by the Holy Spirit, laid down for us the Christian standard of marriage, showing that with a single exception, which the Lord Himself has indicated in Matthew 19, marriage is indissoluble, the marriage relationship once entered into cannot be broken with impunity, and if any one attempts to break it and marries another, he is guilty of the sin of adultery, the violation of the seventh commandment. That at once raises a question, for there are many people who have had rather unhappy marital experiences before their conversion, and have been separated from husband or wife. Remarriage has taken place, and while they are in such circumstances the grace of God finds them and they are saved. What of them? The apostle makes that point clear when he says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." He illustrates this in this way: If you were called, if God saved you as a Jew, do not try to Gentilize yourself but just remain a Jew. Though

you are now a member of the body of Christ you cannot undo what you are by nature, and you cannot undo what has taken place before you were converted. On the other hand, if you were a Gentile before you were converted, and now find yourself in a community, as many did in those days, of Jewish believers, do not attempt to Judaize, do not try to make a Hebrew of yourself, for that is impossible. You are saved as a Gentile, God opened the door of faith to you as a Gentile, He took you up as you were; therefore abide with God. To be either Jew or Gentile means nothing now. The great thing for the future is obedience to the Word of God.

Now that you are a Christian you have a new standard by which to live, for God has given His Word to you. That applies where people have had rather mixed experiences along the line of marriage and divorce. When they are converted, all the past is wiped out by the precious blood of Christ. God called them and He saved them in the condition in which He found them. He did not ask, for instance, that the husband and wife who had been married contrary to Christian principles separate in order to be saved. He took them as they were, made them members of Christ, and He recognizes them as His own who have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit and cleansed by the blood of Christ. Now let them abide in the relationship in which His grace has found them, and by living faithfully as husband and wife adorn the doctrine of Christ.

The apostle continues by saying, "Art thou called being a servant?" The word for "servant" is "bondman," and when this epistle was written slavery extended over the entire world and many of the early Christians were slaves. "Art thou called being a slave? care not for it." Do not get restless because of that. You are the Lord's freeman, but if you are set at large, then use your liberty for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman." He is no longer a slave in God's eyes, he is free to serve Christ; and as the slave serves the earthly master it is a wonderful thing for him to realize, "I am not simply serving my master, I am serving the Lord Christ. He called me in these circumstances, and here I am to glorify Him." And he that is free is not to say, "Well, I have no master, I am free, I am not a slave; I can do as I will." Oh, no! He says, "He that is called, being free, is Christ's servant," and he uses the same word again, Christ's "bondman." He has been bought, he has been purchased, and so is never to seek to have his own way but is to take the way of the Lord.

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." And then he reiterates, "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." That brings in a restriction. I may be saved in a certain calling in which, after all, I could not abide with God.

And then he reverts to what he had been speaking of in the early part of the chapter. "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." Some would say, "Well, the apostle recognized that he was not inspired when he wrote this." Not at all. He is simply telling us that the Lord has given him no commandment to say that a virgin must marry or must not marry, but he gives by inspiration his judgment in the matter. He was a wise pastor who recognized the conditions prevailing at that time, and said, "I suppose, therefore, that this is good for the present distress." The days in which this letter was written were days of great persecution, of fearful suffering, when one might have to flee at a moment's notice and leave home and loved ones for Christ's sake. And so Paul is saying, "For the present distress I should say this is the best thing."

"Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed." If you are bound to a wife, do not, of course, seek to break the tie; but, "Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." But if one says, "Yes, but I have found one who appeals very much to my heart and I would like to make her my wife," if she is willing to share with you the risk and danger, "If thou marry, thou hast not sinned." On the other hand, "If a virgin marry, she hath not sinned." It is not a question of taking vows and saying, "I will or I will not marry." It is a matter of being guided by the Lord under existing circumstances.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none." The apostle says, "Whatever you do, keep in mind that you are here for only a little while, and you are here to glorify God and that is far more important than to seek your own happiness. You are living in difficult times, in perplexing days, but your hope is the Lord's near return." This is always the blessed hope for the Christian, and they were to live with that in view. "This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." In other words, we are not to allow any temporal relationship or any human occupation to hinder our fellowship with God or our obedience to His will. When he says, "It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none," he does not mean that they are to disown their wives, to be cold and indifferent toward them, or hard and unkind. Nothing like that, for he has already inculcated the very opposite principle. He means that the one thing to live for is not your own happiness as husband and wife, but if you are united in the Lord, see that your great business is to live for Him.

A dear friend of mine spent a great deal of his time traveling around the world giving out the gospel and his precious wife remained at home perhaps two-thirds of the year caring for the little family. I once said to her, "It must get awfully lonely for you. You hardly have any married life living like this." Her eyes filled with tears, and she said, "The day my husband and I were married we promised each other we would never let our personal comfort interfere with our devotion to the work of the Lord, and I believe He called my husband for this great evangelistic ministry, and therefore I am glad to keep the house while he goes out to his work." I said, "I have a choice tidbit for you. Have you noticed what David said concerning those that abide by the stuff while the others go out to war? He said, 'As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff' (1 Sam. 30:24). And so if you carry out your part, when the judgment seat of Christ is set up and you and your husband stand there before God, if he has thousands of precious souls to his credit for whom he is to be rewarded in that day, you will get half of it, even though you could not go out and do the preaching, for the Lord says that those who abide by the stuff shall share with those that go to battle." That is the principle. Every one is to act in view of the fact that the time indeed is fleeting, the Lord's return is nearing, and no consideration of personal comfort is to be allowed to hinder devotion to the will of God.

And then Paul adds, "They that weep, as though they wept not." The causes of weeping will soon be over and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. It does not say that you must not weep; but if you do, it is to be as though you wept not. Who are the folk who weep not? They are the happy people; and though you weep you can be joyful, even in the midst of sorrow, if you are looking on to the glad day of the Lord's return.

And then, "They that buy, as though they possessed not." You cannot get through this world without buying; it is impossible to live in this scene without something for physical comfort as you go along. But do not set your heart upon such possessions, do not let your affections be entwined about earthly things. As you go through this world it is perfectly right and proper to enjoy many privileges: "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy"; "and they that use this world, as not abusing it." In other words, do not let the spirit of the world get hold of you. While enjoying the good things that God in His grace lavishes upon you do not set your heart upon them, for they are all fleeting, they will be gone someday. If your treasure is all here, if your heart is set upon things here, when everything here has disappeared, what will you have left? If you have Christ, you will have that which satisfies the soul when everything else is gone.

Remember that the “fashion of this world passeth away.” The apostle is careful to explain that in what he has to say in regard to the single life, as under certain circumstances preferable and possibly wiser than to enter the marriage relation, he does not mean to put people under legal restriction. It is evident it was necessary for him to explain this because within a century-and-a-half after these words were written monasticism had come into the church. People were living in deserts and caves as hermits; they had dedicated themselves to the Lord and taken a vow that they would never marry. Communities of monks and nuns were supposed to be holier than other people, because thus dedicated to a virgin life. The apostle says, “I am not urging anything like that upon you when I speak. It may be wiser for the present distress that you do not marry,” but in the thirty-second verse he says, “I would have you without carefulness.” That is simply, I would have you without anxiety.

In the midst of persecution what crushing anxiety must of necessity rest upon the heart of a husband and father if away for a time, knowing that the family is exposed perhaps to a cruel and awful death. He cannot get them out of his mind and he will find it difficult if away on a mission, to serve the Lord without distraction, and so he says, “He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.” He may say, “I have only one life anyway, and if called to lay it down for the Lord, very well.” It may be a great deal harder if he has to think of wife and children in grave danger because of affliction and persecution.

“He that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.” He that is married is necessarily anxious about temporal things. When he says, “Careth for the things of the world,” it is not meant as a slur as though it were wrong, but it means that he cares for temporal things; he has to think of the provision for and the safety of his loved ones. It is very right and proper that he should. There is the same difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman, if dedicated to the work of the Lord, cares for the things of the Lord that she may be holy in body and in soul. Some of the most wonderful Christians that have ever lived have been women who for Christ’s sake chose never to marry, but to devote their lives to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. I never quite understand why married people who have the comforts of home often speak in a disparaging and unkind way of unmarried people. I should think, if marriage is so delightful, that married people would speak in a very tender and sympathetic way of people who have not married, but instead of that they speak sometimes in such a contemptuous way. I never like to hear people say, “Oh, she is just an old maid!” or, “He is just an old bachelor!” Wait a moment, he whom you so designate

may be glorifying the Lord in a way he could not have done if he were the head of a household, and she of whom you speak may be one who is rendering wonderful service to God and humanity. I repeat, some of the most devoted Christians I have ever known have been unmarried men and women who gave themselves wholly to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. All honor to them!

But now he says, “And this I speak for your own profit”—I do not want to cast a snare upon you, you are perfectly free to choose in the Lord which life you would lead. I am simply exhorting you concerning that which is seemly—“that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.” But if, after thinking it all over, after living up to the present time of life unmarried, you think it might be better for you to marry, very well, do what you will; you do not sin in being married. But on the other hand, if you can stand steadfast in your heart, if you do not feel any particular yearning for the marriage relationship, and have decreed in your heart to live singly, do so. Whether you keep your virginity or whether you do not, you are doing well, if unto the Lord. “He that giveth her in marriage doeth well,” but under these circumstances, “he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.”

And then he concludes by laying down the definite principle, “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth.” Mark this; do not let any one miss this; it does not say, “as long as the man liveth”; it says, “as long as her husband liveth.” If he who was her husband became an adulterer, he has broken the marriage relationship. While he may be forgiven, yet nevertheless, our Lord Jesus shows that there is one sin that dissolves the relationship. “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.” What does that mean? It means a great deal more than just following your own fancy. It means a great deal more than, “in Christ.” We are distinctly told that the Christian is not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. If you are a Christian and unmarried, and you have never thought this through, take it home. If you ever contemplate marriage, put it out of your mind at once that you might possibly marry somebody who is unsaved. That would be positive disobedience to the Word of God. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14). Of course if you are saved while married to an unsaved person, we have had instruction not to leave but to pray that they may be brought to Christ. But if you are not married, settle it in your mind that you will never permit your affections to be entwined around an unsaved person.

An old Puritan said, “If you are a child of God, and you marry a child of the Devil, you will be sure to have trouble with your father-in-law.” Do not forget it.

For a child of God to take the Devil for his father-in-law will be a fearful mistake; nothing but trouble will follow, for God has said so in His Word. You say, "Well, I am thinking of being married, so I must marry a Christian person." True, but there is something even more than that. Let your marriage be "in the Lord." One is to be led by the Lord in this important matter as truly as in anything else, and so, marriage "in the Lord" is marriage in subjection to Him whom we own as Lord and Christ. "Oh," you say, "then if I marry in the Lord, I will always be happy and never have any troubles!" Not necessarily, but when the troubles come you can say, "The Lord gave me this husband, or wife, and the Lord will give me grace to get along with him, or her." When you know it is of the Lord, the Lord will enable you to get through to His honor and glory.

"But," the apostle says, "she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment"; and he is giving inspired judgment, but not a command. It is good sound judgment. You know it is often proven that the second marriage is a mistake. Of course sometimes it is a blessing.

Then I think there is a little irony in the last part of this verse, for there were some people questioning Paul's apostleship and judgment, and so he says, "She is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the mind of Christ." In other words, "They say I haven't, but I think I have." He wrote these words as truly by inspiration as when he penned that matchless eighth chapter of Romans.

Let me bring you back to those words, "This I say, brethren, the time is short." We have but a little while to testify for God. Christian, shall we not seek to use every moment for His glory? Shall we not seek in every calling wherein He has called us to abide and be used in blessing for a lost world? Shall we not put out of our lives anything that hinders fellowship with God and usefulness in testimony?

If you are unsaved, take these words home: "The time is short." The time when mercy is being offered is slipping by.

Life at best is very brief,
Like the falling of a leaf,
Like the binding of a sheaf:
Be in time!

Fairest flowers soon decay,
Youth and beauty pass away,
Oh, you have not long to stay:
Be in time!

Our Lord's return draws near, death too is ever following on your track and you are still out of Christ. In grace He "came from Godhead's fullest glory down to Calvary's depth of woe" for your redemption. Does He not deserve to have you trust Him and confess Him openly as your Savior? "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

LECTURE 17

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND BROTHERLY CARE

1 Corinthians 8:1–13

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him. As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means

this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend. (vv. 1-13)

In this chapter the Spirit of God deals in a very remarkable way with the great theme of Christian liberty and brotherly care. It is almost impossible for us, in a land like this, to visualize the exact circumstances in which the early Christians were found, but those who have labored for any length of time among a heathen people will understand exactly what the problem was with which the apostle deals in this particular chapter. It was the question of how far a Christian was at liberty to eat meats which at their killing had been dedicated to idols. This was the common practice. In fact, practically all the meats that were sold in the markets had been so dedicated. One can understand that many of the early Christians feared that if they fed upon meats of this character they should be bringing dishonor upon the name of the Lord and possibly appear to countenance idol worship. I have noticed the same thing among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona, and also the Navajo and other Indians when they become Christians; they are concerned as to anything that looks like participation in or recognition of heathen ceremonies, because they want the people to understand that they have made a clean cut with the old life. In Corinth this was quite a problem, and it is evident that they had written to the apostle Paul for information concerning it.

"Concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me," we read in the opening verses of the seventh chapter, and this expression introduces the rest of the epistle. From that point on the apostle is dealing with matters that had been submitted to him by letter, that he might give his inspired judgment for the guidance of the church. And so here he says, "As touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge." "We all," that is, we Christians, we know the one true and living God and we know the folly of idolatry. However, in these first three verses the apostle stresses the importance of humility, both as to our attainments in grace and our knowledge of the truth. We may know certain things that others do not, and may act upon our knowledge in such a way as to put a

stumbling block in the path of someone else; so he exhorts us to hold that knowledge that God has given us in the spirit of humility. We quite understand that there are no such beings in the world as those represented by the idols, but that does not do away with the fact that behind the idolatry is satanic power. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to [demons], and not to God" (1 Cor. 10:20); therefore there must be no compromise whatever between Christianity and pagan religions. We know that those who are in the darkness of heathenism are in the bondage of Satan, and therefore our missionaries are not to take from their pagan religions all the good they can and then share what we have with them. Not at all. To a people whom we know to be lost in their sins, worshiping idols that represent nothing that is real, our missionaries go to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. This was what the apostles and their fellow workers went forth to do, and their methods should be our methods. We need nothing new. The gospel is still "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16), and where it is preached in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, miracles will be wrought in the hearts and lives of heathen men today just as truly as nineteen hundred years ago and down through the centuries.

"We know that an idol is nothing in the world," but on the other hand everybody does not have this knowledge, and it may not be wise to say, "It does not make any difference to me whether these meats were offered to idols, and so I am at liberty to eat." Yes, as far as my own conscience is concerned I am at liberty to eat of it, but let me stop to consider the effect of that upon others. "But," you say, "I know." Yes, but "knowledge [mere knowledge] puffeth up." It is quite possible to be conceited and proud over the fact that I have a little knowledge that someone else has not. I may well ask, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). There is a tendency to pride in our hearts even in the things of God. We get a smattering of His Word that some others do not have, and instantly we are lifted up in our own conceit. He says, "Knowledge [if it is only that] puffeth up." Do you see the difference? Knowledge puffs up—love builds up. Some of us get to be like a great swollen frog on a log, just puffed out with wind. We imagine that we have advanced wonderfully over other folk. Throw a stone at the frog and he suddenly shrinks to about one-fifth of the size he seemed to be. Yes, knowledge puffs up but love builds up. It makes for real, solid growth.

We need to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," and if we put knowledge before grace, it will work harm to ourselves as well as to others. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as

he ought to know.” Has God given me a little light on His Word? After all, I know very little compared with the many things of which as yet I have no knowledge, and so let me hold in all humility what He has imparted, thanking Him for it, but walking carefully before Him.

“If any man love God, the same is known of him.” We might have expected the apostle to say, “If a man love God, he knows God.” That is true, but the other side is the wonderful part of it. If any man love God, God knows him, and it is that in which we can rejoice. I like the way the apostle John speaks of himself so often, “The disciple whom Jesus loved.” If you or I had been writing that, we might have said, “The disciple who loved Jesus”; and I do not know whether we would have stopped there, we might have said, “That disciple who loved Jesus whose name is So and So.” That is the way most of us do. Naturally we all like to get our own names to the front. We need to be brought low to the feet of our blessed Savior. John gloried in the fact that he was that disciple whom Jesus loved, and it is for us to rejoice in the fact that we are known and loved of God.

Then in verses 4–6 we have the hollowness and the emptiness of all idolatrous systems. There is a science, a very recent one, known as the “Science of Comparative Religions.” I think it had its origin largely in the World’s Fair held in Chicago in 1893, when there was a great Congress of Religion and teachers came from all parts of the world to exchange thoughts on religious concepts. From that time on men began comparing one religion with another. There is a “Science of Comparative Religions,” but Christianity is not one of them. Christianity is not a religion, it is a revelation. It is not something that men have thought out; it is not a system of philosophy, or ethics; it is something revealed from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit. Idolatrous systems are the works of men energized by the enemy.

“As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.” That God is the God who has been revealed as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. “For though [in the world around and in the pagan nations] there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many), but to us [to those of us who have accepted the revelation that has been given in this holy Word] there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” Observe, Paul is not speaking here of the doctrine of the Trinity, neither is he intimating that it might be a mistake to put our Lord Jesus Christ as the divine eternal Son on the same level with the Father and the Holy Spirit. To us there is one God, and that God is the One who has

revealed Himself in the Word as our Father, as the Creator of all men; He is the Father of all that believe. He is the Father of the universe because that through Him it came into existence; it came out of Him, and therefore there is a sense in which it is perfectly right to speak of the universal Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He is the God of the spirits of all flesh; all men came into existence through Him. But man is a fallen creature, he has turned away from God; he is dead spiritually, and therefore needs to be quickened into newness of life; and it is only when regenerated, when born again, that he comes into the family of God through redemption. Now he can look up into the face of God and say, "Our Father," something that he could not do in his unconverted state.

The apostle says, "There is but one God," and this is perfectly true. Elsewhere in Scripture we find that He subsists in three persons: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That comes out very clearly in the baptismal formula. "Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). How incongruous it would be to put the name of a mere creature in there! Suppose, for instance, much as we revere the one who was blessed and favored above all women because chosen to be the mother of the Son of God, that we should say, "Unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the blessed Virgin Mary." How instinctively every Christian heart would shrink from that. We must not put a creature into the place of Deity, but we can say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," for the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit is God; the Father without the Son and the Holy Spirit would not be God. The Son with the Father and the Holy Spirit is God: the Son without the Father and Holy Spirit would not be God. The Spirit with the Father and the Son is God; but the Spirit without the Father and the Son would not be God. That is a definition that was coined some years ago by the venerable Dr. Joseph Cook of England, and it sets forth the truth as it is in Scripture.

When we are speaking of Christ in His mediatorial position, we bring Him down to the place He took in grace as a Man without denying His Deity. Someone asked me this question: "Is there any sense in which God the Father is greater than Jesus Christ?" When we think of the Lord Jesus as the Eternal Only-begotten Son, He is coequal with the Father; and when He speaks of Himself as the Son, He says, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23). If any man does not honor the Son, he dishonors the Father. "I and my Father are one." But having stooped in grace to become Man, the Man Christ Jesus voluntarily takes a place of subjection to the Father, and therefore, as the Son born on earth of a virgin mother, He is the same Person, but the same

Person in different circumstances; He voluntarily assumes humiliation and says, “My Father is greater than I.” There is no difficulty about this if we remember that He is Son of God in two senses: God the Son from eternity, and the Son of God born of a virgin mother here on earth, with no human father.

“There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him.” And then, there is “one Lord Jesus Christ,” one to whom we yield the allegiance of our hearts and recognize that He is our Savior, “By whom are all things, and we by him.” That is, our blessed Lord is the originator of both creations—“By whom are all things.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1–3). This entire creation came into existence through the word of His power. “He spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast.” He who is God is the Son from all eternity. But this creation fell and a mediator was needed, and so He came into the world in lowly grace; He assumed a servant’s form and became Man without ceasing for one moment to be God. As Man He went to Calvary’s cross to settle the sin question. He was buried, but He rose again in triumph, and as the risen One He is Head of the new creation. “By him are all things”—that is the old creation. “And we by him”—that is the new creation. God has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). For we who were dead in sins have been quickened together with Him, and it is because we know this, because we know that God has thus revealed Himself, that we are through forever with idols. Sometimes when we talk of missions, there are those who speak slightly of this work, speak of it as though it pays very poor returns. We ourselves have only to go back a few centuries to find that our ancestors were idolaters, but the gospel came to them with the knowledge of God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ delivered them from their idolatry and thus we are what we are today. Shall we think for one moment of refusing to give the gospel to those still sitting in the darkness in which our forefathers once sat?

From verse 7 to the end of the chapter the apostle dwells especially on the importance of concern for the consciences of others. We may not face exactly the same problems that these Corinthians did, but we need to have the same care for the consciences of other people. A Christian may say, “I am quite sure that this thing is right; I have perfect liberty, and I am not going to let somebody else dictate to me what I should do.” But stop a moment; suppose that someone else who does not have light on this thing is quite convinced that you are deliberately and willfully disobeying the Word of God. If by-and-by that person should

come to the conclusion that since you, a stronger Christian, feel free to do that, he is free to do it too, what then? Do you not see that his conscience will be defiled and his testimony eventually be ruined. So the apostle says, "There is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol," that is, believing that an idol is a reality, and believing that they are committing an idolatrous act. "And their conscience being weak is defiled." Under those circumstances we can deny ourselves of that which might injure and hurt them if they persist in it.

"But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse." Why do we need to be concerned about nonessentials like these? If this matter will trouble someone else, I will put it out of my life. I will not use my liberty if it causes another to stumble. I will not use my liberty to gratify my own desires. "Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols?" Perhaps he is just a young convert, or simply an inquirer, maybe one not at all established, perhaps not yet truly regenerated, and if he sees you do something that hurts his conscience and he does the same thing, he denies his conscience, and it may lead to the shipwreck of his faith. Because you insist upon your liberty, shall that weak brother perish? He is not affirming that any true child of God will ever be lost, but he puts it in the form of a question. Would you be willing so to behave that it would cause another's shipwreck? "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?"

Some years ago I was preaching in a gospel hall in Detroit. A former Muslim from India was there who was at the head of a tea business, and he had been brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ. On one occasion when holding a meeting there, the Sunday school had its annual outing and we all went over to a beautiful spot, and spent the day together. I was chatting with this brother, Mr. Mohammed Ali by name, when a young girl came by passing out sandwiches. She said, "Won't you have a sandwich?"

"Thank you," I said, "what kind have you?"

"I have several different kinds."

"I will help myself to several of them."

And then she turned to Mr. Ali and said, "Will you have one?"

"What kind are they?" he asked.

"There is fresh pork and there is ham."

"Have you any beef?"

“No, I do not.”

“Have you any lamb?”

“No.”

“Fish?”

“No.”

“Thank you, my dear young lady, but I won’t take any.”

Laughingly she said, “Why, Mr. Ali, you surprise me. Are you so under law that you cannot eat pork? Don’t you know that a Christian is at liberty to eat any kind of meat?”

“I am at liberty, my dear young lady, to eat it,” he said, “but I am also at liberty to let it alone. You know I was brought up a strict Muslim. My old father, nearly eighty years of age now, is still a Muslim. Every three years I go back to India to render an account of the business of which my father is really the head, and to have a visit with the folks at home. Always when I get home I know how I will be greeted. The friends will be sitting inside, my father will come to the door when the servant announces that I am there, and he will say, ‘Mohammed, have those infidels taught you to eat the filthy hog meat yet?’ ‘No, Father,’ I will say; ‘pork has never passed my lips.’ Then I can go in and have the opportunity to preach Christ to them. If I took one of your sandwiches, I could not preach Christ to my father the next time I go home.”

Of course the young lady understood. He was acting exactly as the apostle is suggesting here. We have liberty to refrain from doing these things if they will trouble other people. Love is to be the dominating motive. “When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.”

And so the chapter comes to this striking conclusion, “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” This is true Christian liberty coupled with brotherly care.

LECTURE 18

SERVANT OF ALL

1 Corinthians 9:1–23

Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you,

are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. (vv. 1–23)

Everywhere the apostle went his steps were dogged by legalistic men who hated the doctrine of grace and who sought in every way possible to shake the confidence of his converts. His commission had been called in question and they denied that he was a true apostle. In order to be an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ in an official sense, it was necessary that one should have seen the Lord and have been commissioned by Him. More than that the signs of an apostle, the working of wonders, should be manifested in him, and these enemies of Paul's intimated that he could not be a true apostle, for he had not been connected with the testimony when the Lord was here on earth; he had not seen the Lord, they said, and he did not work the signs of an apostle, having no true commission. He answered them like this, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

Certainly Paul had seen the Lord. He saw Him in the glory that day when he was thrown to the ground on the Damascus turnpike and he beheld the risen

Savior seated on the throne of God. That was the time when he received his commission, for the Lord said: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:16–18). That was the time he saw the Lord, and it was then he received his commission. And had not the signs of an apostle been manifest in him? He does not even deign to speak of the miracles. He had wrought miracles as had the Twelve, but there was a far greater sign that ever accompanied his ministry, and so he says to those who had been turned to the Lord through the preaching of the Word from his mouth, "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." The evidence that he was a truly God-sent servant was found in this, that wherever he went the Spirit of God confirmed the message that he carried, convicted men of their sin, led them to definite faith in Christ, and gave them the assurance of forgiveness and justification, that afterward by a new life they might demonstrate the reality of the work that had taken place in their souls. And so he says, "Do you listen to men who impugn my apostleship? Are you prepared to believe that possibly the signs of an apostle are not found in me? What about yourselves? Who brought you to Christ? To whom are you indebted under God for the knowledge of His grace?" "My answer to them that do examine me is this."

Others said, "Well, you can see he does not have the same confidence that the rest have, he does not even have a wife, he goes about alone." Many believe those people are mistaken who tell us that Paul was a bachelor and that this possibly accounts for some things that he has to say in this letter and elsewhere in regard to the ministry of women. They think this is a mistake because when the blood of the martyr Stephen was shed, he gave his voice (or literally, his vote) against him. That seems to imply that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the high council of the Jews, and that he voted for the death of Stephen. He could not have been a member of the Sanhedrin if he had not attained the age of thirty years and if he had not been a married man. So he may have been married in his earlier life, but now was a widower and chose to devote his life in widowhood to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, not because he thought it was wrong for a minister of Christ to have a wife. The idea that those who preach the gospel should live the celibate life was unknown in apostolic days; that was a superstitious fiction

of later years, when men came to believe that the unmarried monk and the childless nun were holier than the Christian father or mother.

The apostle says, "I have full authority to lead about a sister in Christ as a wife, I have full authority to marry a sister in Christ if I desire to do so. The other apostles did." This of course shows that the celibacy of the clergy, so-called, was unknown in those days. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" That is, James and Jude were married men, and Cephas, Simon Peter, was a married man! Some people tell us that he was the first Pope. Well, then, he was a married Pope. "Or," says the apostle, "should only I and Barnabas live this celibate life?" They chose that life that they might be untrammelled in their missionary work as they traveled from land to land enduring hardships one should not expect a wife to endure with them.

Others objected on this ground, "He knows he is not a real apostle for he does not depend on his ministry for his temporal support." I suppose if he were living today, there would be those who would say, "He degrades the cloth by working for a living." He was a tentmaker, and some said, "He would never soil his hands making tents if he knew that he was a genuinely appointed apostle; he would never stoop to anything like that." But he says, "Oh, no, I have a perfect right to be supported in the same way as others, but I have reasons why I refuse to permit you to support me." He came to them when they were heathens, when they were pagans and living vile ungodly lives, and he did not intend to pass the collection plate and ask them to contribute toward his support; he would rather go among them and labor, working with his own hands to support himself and his companions and keep the gospel absolutely without charge. I wish the church of God had never given up that position. It is a great reproach on the church of God when its representatives turn to a Christless world and beg and wheedle money out of ungodly men to support the work of the Lord. The divine method is that the gospel of God should be supported by the people of God who give out of love for Christ, and when a servant of Christ under certain circumstances is not thus properly supported, he should not be above working with his own hands while he continues to minister the gospel as occasion presents itself.

The apostle here shows that it is quite right and proper that the Lord's servants should be supported by the church of God. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" If a man is a soldier, he is not expected to support himself; the country for whom he is fighting takes care of him. "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the

same also?" And then he uses an apt illustration from the law of Moses. It is written in the book of Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" (25:4). The reference is to the old-fashioned way of threshing corn or wheat. The ox goes around and around and treads it out. How inhuman it would be if the ox becoming hungry would not be permitted to munch a little of the grain as he treads it out. The law permitted him to have some for himself. "Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written." There is an admonition here, something for the people of God to take note of: "That he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope."

And so he lays this down as a principle, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things," that is, if the servant of Christ gives his whole time and energy to the study of the Word of God in order to prepare himself the better to minister the things of the Lord, if he turns from what people call secular life, "is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Just as the ox finds its food in the work it is doing, so the Lord has appointed that His servants should be cared for by those who receive benefit from the ministry that they give. "If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power"—we prefer to forego our own rights in order that you may see that our service is an unselfish one and in order that the heathen may not say that we are in the ministry for what we can get out of it. "Lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."

It is perfectly true that they that minister about holy things should live of them. These words refer to the priests in Judaism for they were sustained by tithes and offerings. "They which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar." In our dispensation while there is no distinct priesthood, and all believers are priests, yet they that give themselves to ministering the Word are to be sustained by the people of God in that work. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." But if a servant of Christ says, "I choose to forego that privilege, I am able to support myself and still carry on the work of the Lord," he is free to do it. Paul says, "I have chosen that path, I do not want one of you to say that a selfish motive actuated me. I preach the gospel, but I have nothing to glory in; I am a servant. My Master sent me to preach it. He put necessity upon me, yea, I find myself in trouble if I do not preach it." "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" I wonder if that word has been forgotten by many who once gave themselves to the ministry of the gospel, but today seldom mention the great truths whereby men and women are saved. Is it not a sad fact that many today who are looked upon as evangelistic

preachers never tell sinners that Christ died for the ungodly, never proclaim the saving power of the Lord Jesus, never exalt the cross as the only means of redemption for poor sinners? What an account to face before the Lord someday! I wish that a minister of Christ who gives himself to what he calls a social program, merely ethical preaching, might be awakened through these words of the apostle, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Our responsibility is to make Christ known as the only Savior of sinners. If I do this thing willingly, if I gladly go forward preaching the gospel for the name's sake of the Lord Jesus, by-and-by when I stand at the judgment seat I shall be rewarded.

Never mind whether people appreciate me now, never mind whether I get my reward down here, I can leave it until that day when the Lord will estimate everything aright. But even if I do not preach the gospel willingly, still the message is going out, and God will bless the message, but I myself will lose the reward. "A dispensation [a stewardship] . . . is committed unto me," and I must fulfill it. What is my present reward? That I make money in preaching it? No! That "I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." I will not go to dying men and say, "Give me your money, and if you do, I will preach to you," but I will go and preach the Word freely whether I ever receive a penny for it or not. After they become converted it remains with them and the Lord: it is my business to give out the message. The apostle takes a very high and noble position. It is a most obnoxious thing to God when those of us who profess to be ministers of the Word commercialize His truth by setting a price upon our service. Only so much preaching for so much money. Paul says, "It is my joy to preach whether supported by men or not; I make the gospel without charge."

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." I am not concerned about what men think of me, but I have deliberately and of my own volition made myself to be the servant of men. What does he mean by that? Simply this, I am the servant of Christ, but Christ has sent me to minister His Word, and I seek to do so in such a way as best to reach men in their need, and in this sense I put myself under bondage to men in order that I may make the gospel clear to all men. "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." When he preached to the Jews, you will find instance after instance in the book of Acts where he turned them back to the Old Testament, to their Jewish ceremonies and laws, and based everything upon the Jews' hope of the Messiah, showing how all has been fulfilled in Christ. On the other hand, when speaking to the Gentiles, men who did not know the law of Moses, he put himself on a level with those to whom he spoke. He talked

of God, the Creator of all things, who gives us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). The God who does all this cannot be an image, an idol made with man's hands, He created the heavens and the earth. And then he undertakes to show how God has sent His Son to save men who have sinned against Him; he puts the gospel in a way that the Gentiles may understand it.

Verse 21 is very interesting and should be a help to many who may not quite understand the Christian's relation to the law. Reading from the latter part of verse 20, "To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law." Here we have two classes of men. There are those that are under the law, they are the Jews or, in our day, any to whom the law of God has come. But here is the other class, "To them that are without law, as without law," that is, the Gentile nations, the pagan nations. They have never heard the law of God. If Paul himself were under the law, as some Christians think a believer is, he would not say, "I *became* as under the law." Where was Paul? He was not under the law nor was he without law. He was neither subject to some legal ritual nor was he lawless. Where did he stand? Between the two, "Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." He says, as it were, "I am not under the law of Moses, neither am I lawless, but I am under law to God, being legitimately subject to Christ." Do you see the place of the believer? Neither under law nor without law, but legitimately subject to Christ. And where has Christ expressed His mind for me? In the four Gospels and in the Epistles. Somebody says, "You do not mean the four Gospels! Do you not know that they are altogether Jewish?" I know some have said that, but I remember that the Spirit of God has said something very serious in regard to such. He says in 1 Timothy, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings" (6:3-4). Let us be very careful that we do not teach otherwise than in accordance with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The words of our Lord are found in the four Gospels, nowhere else excepting in the first part of the book of Revelation and in one or two sentences in the book of Acts, and there the Lord shows us the kind of life Christians should live. Paul says, "I seek to be legitimately subject to Christ." And then the Lord has further given His will in what we call the Epistles. Through the Holy Spirit He has shown us the heavenly calling and the lives that should correspond. We

should be very careful if we say we are not under the law, which is true, lest we are found to be lawless, which is antinomianism and repugnant to God. We are to be en-lawed, or legitimately subject to Christ.

“To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak.” That is, in ministering the Word of God Paul delighted to enter into the circumstances of the people to whom he spoke. Possibly you make up a sermon in the quiet of your study, working it all out carefully, your introduction, your firstly, secondly, thirdly, and as many other numbers as you like, and then your conclusion, and you say, “There, I have a sermon on such and such a text.” And then you go to the pulpit without taking the needs of the people into consideration, and you just pour out the sermon that you have made up for them in the study. That was not Paul’s way; he had the needs of men before him and he preached the Word. A minister told me about a difficult position in which he found himself at one time. He always read his sermons, and he had been asked to go and preach to a certain congregation, and so, looking through the barrel, he selected one and shoved it into his briefcase with his Bible. When he got on the platform, he pulled it out, spread it before him, and found that he had brought a different sermon than the one he intended taking. It was a Memorial Day sermon, and this was some time in the fall of the year. So he said, “I am very sorry, dear friends, I have made a mistake, but I am going to give you a sermon I preached on Memorial Day and hope you will get something out of it.” Is it any wonder that people get so little edification when they listen to things like that? As a minister of Christ Paul’s great object was to get to the hearts of men and give them the Word as they needed it. “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak.” He did not try to astonish people with his eloquence, he gave them the Word to convict and help and bless and cheer and make things plain to them, that he might gain the weak. In fact he says, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” This should be the object of all gospel testimony. We have been commissioned to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

LECTURE 19

STRIVING FOR A CROWN

1 Corinthians 9:24–27

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (vv. 24–27)

There are two lines of truth running parallel through the Word of God; salvation, which is by grace alone, and reward for devoted service. Salvation is not a reward for anything that you or I may do, nor is heaven a reward for a life of faithfulness here on earth. Salvation is a free gift, eternal life is a free gift, heaven is the home of all the redeemed, open to every one who puts his or her trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot pay for a place in heaven; we cannot earn it by tears, by sacrifices, by our gifts or by anything that we can do.

Could my zeal no respite know,
 Could my tears forever flow,
 All for sin could not atone;
 Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
 Simply to Thy cross I cling;
 Naked, come to Thee for dress,
 Helpless, look to Thee for grace.

That must ever be the confession of every saved soul. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). But while salvation, eternal life, a place in heaven, are all set before us as God’s free gifts to believing sinners, the Word of God has a great deal to say about the importance of service and about rewards for faithfulness. “Behold, I come quickly,” says our blessed Lord, “and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12). Manifestly, the reward is not a place with Himself in heaven, but it is the special expression of His satisfaction in the believer because of devotedness, because of faithfulness in the life. The importance of this is brought out in the passage before us.

The apostle Paul has the race course in mind. There is a great deal in the Bible about athletics. One can scarcely help coming to the conclusion that Saul of Tarsus was a thoroughly red-blooded young man, interested in games and sports and in everything that would challenge a normal, clean, decent young fellow such as he evidently was even before he was converted. What he saw in the games made a deep impression on his mind, and the Holy Spirit used all this in after years to give us some very striking and remarkable illustrations, one of which we have here. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?” What is the prize at the end of the race? For a young Greek it would not be citizenship. It was a law with the Greeks that no young man could contend in the games unless he could prove that he was of pure Greek parentage; that had to be settled before he became a contestant. As the people watched the races they knew that those young men were already Greeks by birth. They were Greek citizens running a race. For what? To obtain honor, to obtain glory, to obtain a prize. And so the apostle here pictures those who are saved as running a race. We are already heavenly citizens. Of every Christian it is written, “Our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the

Lord Jesus Christ; who shall [transform] our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20–21). Our citizenship is settled if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not born Christians, but we are born-again Christians. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:6–7).

It is a great moment in the soul's history when he awakes to realize that by nature and practice he is an alien, "alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works" (Col. 1:21), that he does not belong to the family of God; that ere he can belong to the family of God a change must take place, a change which he himself cannot effect, but which God brings about by His sovereign power. "Of his own will," says James, "begat He us [*by*] the word of truth" (James 1:18). Notice, it is through the Word that we are begotten of God. Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word [not the whole Bible as such] which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:23–25). Believing the gospel we are born into the family of God. And now, as in the family of God, we are running a race, not to get to heaven for, as far as that is concerned, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16), but we are running a race for reward for Christian service, Christian responsibility, and if we run our race well, there is a reward at the end. If we fail in the race, we fail in the reward. We do not fail of heaven, of salvation, because our work is not all it ought to be or all we would like it to be. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:15), provided he is a Christian.

So the apostle says, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." If I am going to run in order to obtain a prize, I must do it in obedience to the Word of God. "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). The 1911 King James Version translates it, "If a man contend in the games yet is he not crowned if he hath not observed the rules." God has given us instruction in the Word concerning how we are to serve, how we are to run, what we are to do, and we will be rewarded if we go in accordance with the Book.

An incident struck me forcibly some years ago when working among the Indians in New Mexico. It was during the time of the Olympic games in Stockholm, Sweden. One Saturday night I went to the trader's store. He was a

very intelligent Christian Indian, and was also my interpreter. He was standing up on a chair with perhaps forty or fifty Indians crowded around him, and he was reading from a newspaper and interpreting it for these Indians. I stepped up behind him, and as I looked over his shoulder, I saw that he had a metropolitan newspaper containing an account of the games in Stockholm, Sweden, telling of the triumphs of that well-known Indian athlete, James Thorpe. Many of these Indians knew him well, and how proud they were to think that one of their race had gone over there and, contending with a great number of different athletes, had carried away the greater part of the prizes. Their enthusiasm knew no bounds when the interpreter translated the words of the King of Sweden as he took him by the hand and said, "You, sir, are the greatest amateur athlete in the world today." Those Indians were so interested because he was one of their own, and had beaten the white man in his own games.

A few weeks later I went into the store again. Once more the trader was reading from a newspaper, but this time the atmosphere was tense. I could feel that something was wrong. The Indians were scowling and grunting and I wondered what it was all about, so I stepped behind the interpreter again and looked over his shoulder, and read that a certain white man had been indignant that an Indian should have carried off so many prizes, and so made an investigation of his past life and found that some years before when a student at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, he had received five dollars a week during the summer months for playing ball with a village baseball team. They unearthed the evidence, sent it to the King of Sweden, and proved to him that James Thorpe had no right to participate in the games at all because they were entirely for amateurs. He had taken money for playing ball, and that put him out of the amateur class. The king had written to Thorpe and asked him to send back all the papers and medals, and it had nearly broken his heart. He sent all back and wrote to the king, "I hope your majesty will not think too hard of me. Please remember that I am only a poor ignorant Indian boy. I did not know that taking five dollars a week for playing ball on the village baseball team made me a professional. I never meant to deceive." The sequel of that story was that the man who came next in the contests sent them all back to Jim and said, "I won't keep them; you did better than I, and you deserve them." James Thorpe did his work well, but he had not observed the rules, and he lost out accordingly.

I am afraid there is many a one who does a great deal of what we call "Christian work," works early and late, and hard and often, and yet who will fail of the reward at the judgment seat of Christ because instead of going by the Word of God he has simply been following his own ideas and inclinations. "So run, that

ye may obtain." How important, fellow Christians, that we study the Bible and learn what God's mind is, and then work accordingly.

Now notice the importance of self-control. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." One cannot help but admire some of these splendid young athletes as they look forward to a field day or something of the kind. How self-denying they can be as they train down. They will set a mark and say, "I must enter the field weighing just so much, and before that day I have so many pounds to lose, for I must be at my very best." Some of their friends may say, "Come, now, let us go out and indulge in this and that." But the athlete who means to succeed says, "I cannot do that, I must be at my best when I get into the arena. I cannot, I dare not dissipate." "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown." In this instance it was a wreath of laurel which would fade away in a few hours, and yet how much young men were willing to endure to win that crown, to have it placed upon their brow by the judge among the plaudits of the people. "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." We have an incorruptible crown in view, and shall we be less consistent, less self-denying, shall we show less self-control than they? For us there stands in the distance the blessed Lord Himself waiting to place upon our brow the incorruptible crown, and alas, alas, many of us are in danger of losing it because we are so self-indulgent, so careless, so carnal, and so worldly minded. Let us take a lesson from the athlete and be willing to give up present pleasures for future glory.

The crown, you see, is the symbol of reward. It is presented in different ways in the Scriptures. In the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians the apostle, speaking to his own converts, says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (v. 19). What is the crown of rejoicing? That is the soul-winner's crown. Oh, to get home to heaven to stand at the judgment seat of Christ, and see there a great throng that one has had the privilege of leading to Christ! What a crown, what a reward that will be! Think what it will mean for the apostle Paul when surrounded by all his converts he comes before the Lord and says, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." Are you going in for a crown of rejoicing? It is your privilege if you know Christ.

The apostle says to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). The gift of righteousness is ours by faith. Every believer has been made the righteousness of God in Christ, but the *crown of righteousness* is the reward given

to those who behave themselves in the light of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you love His appearing? How do you show it? By ordering your behavior now in view of His close return. “Every man that hath this hope [set on] him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

In James and in the book of the Revelation we have another term used. In Revelation we read, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (2:10). And James says, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12). *Eternal life* is ours by faith. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36). But the *crown of life* is earned by patient suffering, by enduring trial and temptation, taking it all as from the hand of God Himself, even unto death if need be rather than to deny the name of Jesus.

In 1 Peter we read, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you.” He does not say, “Fleece the flock,” but, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:1–4). I like that, a crown of *glory*! Every believer will be glorified. “Whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30), but the *crown* of glory is the reward for feeding the sheep and the lambs. In the earliest Chinese translations they had different terms for some of the idioms used. First Peter 5:4 would read like this, “When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you will receive a bright hat that will never wear out.” “A crown of glory that fadeth not away” is to be given by the blessed Lord Himself. My brethren, shall we allow the things of time and sense to so absorb us that we shall lose out in that day? Let us rather gladly say:

Take the world and give me Jesus,
All earth’s joys are but in vain;
But His love abideth ever,
Through eternal years the same.

Let us gladly “lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the

author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1–2).

This was Paul's determination, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." Some people imagine that Paul was not quite sure that he would get to heaven, that he feared that something might happen that would turn him aside. But he is thinking of the reward at the end, and he is not afraid of losing this for he is determined to go through with God. He says that he is not uncertain; "so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." I am not engaged in a sham battle. And then, how important this is!—"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." What does he mean? Is it just a haunting fear that he may backslide and be lost after all? Keep in mind what he is speaking of here. He is speaking of reward for service, and is saying, "I want to so serve that I can have the Lord's approval in that day. I must not be self-indulgent, I must not let my physical passions master me, but I must master them and keep under my body." My body is not to be the lord of me, I am to be the lord of my body. Sustained by divine grace I am to keep every physical appetite in its place, lest if I become careless and self-indulgent I bring dishonor upon the name of the Lord and become a castaway.

What does he mean by a castaway? The word *adokimos* means "disapproved." Lest he be disapproved, lest the Lord shall say to him someday, "Paul, I had a crown for you, I was counting on you, and for a while you ran well. What hindered you? You became self-indulgent and careless, and you broke down and brought dishonor upon My name. I cannot crown you, Paul; you will have to stand to one side and let someone else have the crown." To be set to one side when they are giving out the crowns! God grant that you and I may not have to endure this great disappointment.

Have you not known of those who ran well for years and then little by little began to let down? They were not as prayerful as they used to be, they did not give as much time to the careful study of the Word as they did in the early days, they gave freer rein to the natural appetites, they thought more of their own pleasure and of taking their ease, and one day the whole Christian community in which they moved was startled to hear that there had been a terrible breakdown. They may have confessed it all with breaking hearts and eyes from which the tears were streaming, they may have judged it all and turned from it, yet people never trusted them again as they had before, and possibly they were never able to go on with their ministry. No matter how freely and fully God had

forgiven, they never could be what they once were. Some experiences are simply heartbreaking, and so the word to every one who attempts to help others in spiritual things is, be careful of yourselves. "Take heed to thyself," says the apostle writing to Timothy. Keep your physical appetites in subjection, keep your body in its place, do not allow any appetite to master you, and thus you will be able to serve to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you become careless, He may have to put you to one side, and He who once used you will not be able to do so in the future in the way He did in the past.

The word *disapprove* is also used for complete disapproval. You may be a church member taking more or less part in so-called Christian work, but see to it that there is a real work of grace in your own soul, or the day may come when you will be utterly disapproved and you will find yourself outside the number of those who enter into the Father's house in that day, not because you were once saved and are so no longer, but because your life has proved that you were never truly born of God.

LECTURE 20

OLD TESTAMENT TYPES OF NEW TESTAMENT TRUTHS

1 Corinthians 10:1–14

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition,

upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. (vv. 1–14)

If I were to choose one verse out of these fourteen as a text, it would be verse 11, “Now all these things happened unto them for examples [the word is really *types*]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world have arrived.”

I learn a number of things from this verse. In the first place, I learn that all that is recorded concerning the nation of Israel in the Old Testament is sober, reliable history. The Word says, “All these things happened.” This is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I believe it without a question. The account of the origin of mankind as given in the book of Genesis happened just as we are told it did. It has been given by the only One who was there to know, and that is God Himself. The history of mankind as further unfolded in that early book is all true. “All these things happened.” And then after the calling of Abraham and the separation of the Hebrew people from the Gentile world, the story given in the rest of the books of the Old Testament as to God’s dealings with these people is true history and nothing imaginary, nothing legendary, but actual history. “These things happened.”

The second thing I learn from this verse is that in the preparation of the volume of Holy Scripture, the Spirit of God so guided and directed the human writers that He led them to eliminate anything extraneous, anything not particularly helpful to us, and that the incidents recorded are there for a definite purpose. “All these things happened unto them for [types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have arrived.” They took place literally just as we are told they did. But there was something beyond the literal. The nation of Israel is a typical nation, the redemption of Israel is a typical redemption, the sacrifices offered under the law were typical sacrifices, the sanctuary of the Hebrew people was a typical sanctuary. David exclaims, “In His sanctuary every whit of it uttereth his glory,” and so we may profitably read all of these Old Testament stories with the light of the New Testament shining upon them and see there marvelous pictures, wonderful types of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the people of God today. And so there are both encouragements and warnings for us in the history of Israel.

In the early part of this chapter the apostle particularly deals with some of these narratives. He reminds us how a great multitude went out of Egypt and started ostensibly for the land of Canaan, the land of promise, but many of them failed to reach that land because of unbelief which led them to many other kinds of sin, and so he says, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." That is, as that great company of hundreds of thousands of Israelites left the land of Egypt, it would have been impossible for any one to have drawn any distinction between those who were real and faithful and those who because of sin and unbelief would have to be destroyed. And so the warning comes home to us: it is one thing to profess to be a Christian, it is one thing even to participate in the ordinances of Christianity, to have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to take part in the Supper of the Lord, to receive the consecrated elements that speak of the precious body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ given up to death for us; it is one thing to associate outwardly with the people of God and to seem to have fellowship and communion with them, but it is another thing to prove genuine by going on with God, by living for God, and by bearing a faithful testimony right on to the end. Of course, where there is a real work of the Spirit of God in a man's soul, it will be continuous, but alas, there are many of whom it can be said, "Thou hast a name that thou livest; and art dead" (Rev. 3:1).

A number of years ago I was invited by a very godly minister to address his congregation on a certain Lord's Day, and never having preached from his pulpit before, and not knowing what kind of a congregation I might be expected to face, and therefore being rather at sea as to the nature of the message that would be most suitable, I said to him, "Doctor, when I come to speak to your people, what kind of an audience will I address? Will they be mainly your own members, all Christian people, or many strangers and possibly unconverted people?" I can still see the look of sadness that came over his face and the tears that came into his eyes as he said, seriously and solemnly, "Well, my brother, I think that most of them will be our own people; we do not get a great many strangers in our place. But I am afraid that very few of our own members are Christians. After having been with them for a number of years, I greatly regret to say that I fear that the majority of them are like the foolish virgins, they have no oil in

their lamps; and therefore I hope you will come to us with a clear, definite gospel message, and I shall be praying that God may use it for the awakening and the salvation of many of our people.” What a solemn thing to have to make a confession like that! And yet is it not true in many places today? We take too much for granted when we suppose that membership in a Christian church, that participation in Christian ordinances and in outward fellowship, means that one is really a child of God. There must be a second birth, there must be personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Israel there were two groups: those who had true faith in God and those who simply had an outward relationship to the people of the covenant. Those who had that outward relationship went with the rest through the Red Sea, and the apostle likens that to baptism. They were sheltered by the pillar of cloud and fire, and he compares that to the gift of the Holy Spirit. They all ate of the manna that came from heaven, and that speaks of participation in Christian fellowship at the table of the Lord. They all drank the water that came from the smitten rock, and that was an outward picture of those who drink today of the water of life that flows from the side of the wounded Christ. But this might all be outward, there might be no reality in the heart, no real work in the soul. Those who were real drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. In other words, it was not enough to drink of the water that came from the smitten rock, but of the stream that flowed from another Rock, and wherever there was reality they drank of the “attendant Rock,” as one has translated it. It was Christ who led the people of Israel across the desert into the land of Canaan as the Angel of the Lord. Jehovah said, “My name is in him” (Exod. 23:21), and in every dispensation all who have been saved at all have been saved through the Lord Jesus Christ. All who were genuine in their profession at any time and in any age were saved because they had put their trust in the revelation that God gave concerning the Seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent. But with many of this company God was not well pleased and they were overthrown. Why? Because of sin. And so the warning comes home to us now to learn from God’s dealings with this typical people the importance of being right with God today. Turn from everything unholy, judge every tendency in yourself to that which is impure and unclean, that God may be glorified in you.

“Now these things were [types], to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” Christ is the great satisfying portion of the heart. The only way that one can be delivered from the corruption that is in the world through lust is by finding heart satisfaction in the Savior.

O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace, the joy I sought so long,
The bliss till now unknown.

I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
But ah, their waters failed,
E'en as I stooped to drink they fled,
And mocked me as I wailed.

The pleasures lost I sadly mourned,
But never wept for Thee,
Till grace my sightless eyes received,
Thy loveliness to see.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me,
There's love, and life, and rest, and joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

When people profess to be Christians, outwardly profess to be members of the church of the Living God, and yet give every evidence that their hearts are still in the world, when there is no separation from the world, no breaking from the things that dishonor our blessed God, when they are still taken up with "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—one may stand in grave doubt as to whether they have ever really been brought to drink of that spiritual "attendant Rock," that Rock which is Christ.

And then we are warned against putting anything in the place of God. "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." The reference is to the making of the golden calf which they set up in the wilderness. Moses had gone up into the mount. Their leader who had brought them out of Egypt was no longer visible, just as our blessed Lord has gone to the Father's right hand in heaven and our eyes do not now see Him. Therefore the people turned to Aaron and said, "We cannot see this man, he has disappeared from us; now make us gods that shall go before us, tangible gods that we can see and worship." And so Aaron told them to bring all the gold, all the "earrings," and other ornaments, and he would make a god for them. And they brought them and he melted them all down, poured

the metal into a mold, and made a calf of gold, and set it upon a pedestal, and even gave it Jehovah's name. He said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." And the people danced around it and sat down to eat a sacramental meal in the presence of the golden calf, because of which the judgment of God burned fiercely against them as Moses came down from the mount. You remember the dreadful results. Many of them died under the hand of God, they that were spared even had to drink the calf! Moses took the calf of gold that they had made, and ground it into fine dust and poured this into the water that they drank. That was the "gold cure" to show them the folly of worshiping any other than the one true and living God, and the lesson for us is that if we dare to put anything else in the place of God, no matter how precious it may seem to be, the time will come when we will rue it. The golden calf is still worshiped. Many worship money, wealth, pleasure, and yet claim to be followers of the lowly Savior, "Who though in the form of God, thought equality with God not something to be grasped after: but emptied himself, and became obedient unto death, and such a death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8, literal rendering). How can I be a consistent follower of Him if I put self or anything that this poor heart of mine can crave on earth in the place of the true and living God? "Little children," says John, "keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

The third is a solemn warning and is against every kind of uncleanness, "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." We are living in a day when uncleanness is everywhere. Our modern novels are reeking with it, our newspaper stands are filled with vile pornographic literature that came from hell, and men are enriching themselves by poisoning the minds of our young people. The pictures they see, the songs that come over the radio, many are filled with suggestions of impurity and uncleanness. How sternly the Christian church needs to set its face against everything of this kind. We should have no compromise whatever with impurity. People see the pictures, read the books, listen to the songs, and they all have their effect upon the flesh, and before you know it men are drifting off into unholy, unclean things because of the constant incitation to them in the music and literature of the day. Let us give everything like that a wide berth. "Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. 5:13).

I am reminded that this eighth verse is one that unbelievers and modernists like to point to as an evidence that the Bible cannot be fully inspired. We read that because of this sin there "fell in one day three and twenty thousand." And if you turn back to Numbers 25:5, you will find that twenty-four thousand were destroyed because of the sin of fornication. Therefore, these objectors say, "There

is a contradiction in your Bible; in one place it says twenty-four thousand were destroyed and in another twenty-three thousand." It is not difficult to harmonize the two accounts. In Numbers the complete account is given, there were twenty-four thousand destroyed during that period in which God was dealing with His people, but in 1 Corinthians the apostle is stressing the fact that the very first day that the judgment began twenty-three thousand died. The other thousand, of course, died later on. But he is emphasizing the fact that so indignant was God with His people when they fell into the sin of uncleanness that in one day He destroyed twenty-three thousand.

Notice the fourth warning. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." How did they tempt Him? When they said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" they limited the Holy One of Israel. If we say, "Can God undertake for me? I am in very difficult circumstances; is God able to see me through?" we limit God, we limit the blessed God of all grace who gave His Son for us. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). Faith believes God and never tempts Him, but goes forward in obedience to His Word.

Then the fifth warning, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." The reference here is to the destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in the wilderness. They murmured against God and Moses, the servant of the Lord, and Aaron, the high priest of Jehovah, saying, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" (Num. 16:3). They practically said, "We do not need a mediator, we do not need a high priest, we are good enough for God as we are." They found fault with God's provision for them and destruction was the result.

Let us be grateful to God for the provision He has given through His Word and the Holy Spirit for the salvation of our souls and our building up in Christ. Let us never allow ourselves to become self-confident and imagine we can get along without the daily ministry of our risen, glorified Lord, our High Priest in heaven. "All these things happened unto them for [types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [have arrived]." In view of them, let us walk carefully, and, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Let him test his foundation, make sure that he is taking the Word of God as his guide, that he is resting upon the testimony that God has given, and when the hour of trial comes, he can be sure that there is abundant grace to sustain.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13), He did this for Israel of old. As we read the story of His dealings with them, we have instance after instance of His wonderful intervention when they were at their very wits’ end, and the God who sustained His people in the wilderness, fed them on manna from heaven and water from the smitten rock, and drove out their enemies from the land of Canaan, is living still. In the measure in which we learn to depend on Him, to count on Him, we too shall find deliverance in the hour of difficulty and trial.

And so the passage closes with the solemn warning, “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” These are serious admonitions. Let us take them to our hearts, remembering that it is one thing to have made a profession, but it is another thing to have that profession backed up by a godly life that proves the profession to be real.

LECTURE 21

THE TABLE OF THE LORD AND THE TABLE OF DEMONS

1 Corinthians 10:15–30

I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he? All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question

for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? (vv. 15–30)

We have in this passage a very serious and solemn word regarding the celebration of the Lord's Supper which has been maintained in the Christian church for the last nineteen hundred years. In the earlier part of the chapter we were warned against compromising with the world. Now Paul continues that warning, saying, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." In civilized lands we do not come in contact with idolatry in the sense that the apostle primarily means it here, but this is still a very live question in pagan lands, where it is found to be very necessary to separate the converts from absolutely everything of a heathenish or idolatrous character, because if there is any compromise, any fellowship with them, the tendency of all these things is to drag one back to the old levels. Here at home we are more concerned about the gay, godless world around us. We have heard the challenge of the Spirit of God, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17), and as wise men we will apply the principle of this passage to the conditions under which we live.

As Christians we are linked with the table of the Lord, let us see to it that we "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). We are told, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" In these words he shows us that the Lord's Supper, as we commonly call it, sets forth the very foundation principles of Christianity. It is a rallying center, as it were, where God's people come together to openly confess their adherence to these great fundamental truths. Notice the order given: the cup first, the bread second. When our Lord instituted the Supper, and when we participate in it, thanksgiving for the bread is first, and then for the cup; but the apostle here mentions the cup first because it sets forth the precious poured-out blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and there can be no relationship with God for those who by nature and practice are lost sinners, until

they have been cleansed by the precious blood of Christ. Every time the Communion feast is celebrated, the great fact is emphasized that it is the blood, the blood of Jesus alone, that cleanses from sin and gives access to the presence of God. In this we may see the reason for Satan's antagonism against this ordinance. It suffers in two ways. On the one hand there are those that have added to it a great many unscriptural superstitious practices and have made it a strange and weird mystery, so that many Christians are almost afraid to approach the table of the Lord. On the other hand there are those who pretend to have a deeper spirituality and a greater Bible knowledge than ordinary Christians, and so put the Lord's Supper to one side on the plea that we have no need of ordinances of any kind in the Christian, which is a spiritual, dispensation.

We need to remember that the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper were given, not so much to be helpful to Christian people as such, though they are helpful to them, but to be a testimony to the world outside and to form as it were a line of demarcation between the church and the world. We have already seen how baptism does that. I trust the Lord Jesus Christ in my heart, I accept Him as my Savior, and by my baptism I am saying to the world, "I have identified myself with the Christ that you have rejected; henceforward I am

Dead to the world and all its toys,
Its idle pomp and fading joys;
Jesus, my glory be!

If baptism does not mean that to me, it is really nothing more than a mere empty form; but if I see that by my baptism I am confessing my identification with the rejected Christ, it becomes a sweet and precious ordinance and is a testimony to the world outside. The Lord's Supper is also a testimony. Baptism speaks of my death with Christ; the Lord's Supper speaks of Christ's death for me as the only ground of approach to and fellowship with God. And so we read, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (11:26). The word translated "show" is exactly the same word which is used on many other occasions in the book of the Acts and in the Epistles for "preach." "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do [*preach*—you *proclaim*] the Lord's death till He come," and so by participation in the Lord's Supper today we are preaching to the world around the blessed fact that Christ has died and that His precious blood alone can cleanse from sin. Therefore the emphasis on the cup. First, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" That is the expression of fellowship which

is based upon the blood of Christ. Therefore, you can readily see that no one has part nor lot in this ordinance, no one ought ever to participate in it, who does not put his or her trust in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. I cannot understand how any one who denies the atoning efficacy of the blood of Jesus could even desire to take part in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and yet I am told that in places where Christ's atoning death is scouted, in places where men ridicule the thought of salvation by His precious blood, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is still observed in a formal way. It seems to me that is an insult to God, it is an insult to the blessed Savior whose death is commemorated in this service. Christ died for sinners, poured out His blood to redeem us to God, therefore from time to time we come together to remember Him in the drinking of the cup.

Then notice that the bread used in the Supper of the Lord has, if I may so say, a double significance. It speaks of the literal body of our Savior which was offered for us upon the cross, but there is another and wider sense in which it speaks of the mystical body of Christ to which all believers belong. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" It expresses our fellowship with the body of Christ. He said, "This is My body which is given for you." That precious body of His came into being in a different way from any other body. It was the direct creation of the Holy Spirit of God in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary. Christ says, "A body hast thou prepared me" (Heb. 10:5). It was a human body, a body in every respect like ours excepting that there were in that body no sinful tendencies whatever, for our Lord Jesus Christ was, from the moment of His birth as He had been from all eternity, the Holy One of God.

In that prepared body He went to the cross and died for our sins; in fact, He assumed that body in order that He might die. Deity as such cannot die. God, no matter how much He loved us, could not die, but God becoming Man, God taking humanity into relationship with Deity could die as Christ has died on Calvary's tree. And so, every time we participate in the Lord's Supper we are again announcing the fact, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (15:3). This service preaches, it preaches loudly, of salvation only through that vicarious Sacrifice offered upon the cross.

It is evident that the apostle by the Spirit of God attaches a wider meaning to the use of the bread in the Communion service. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." When he says, "we all" he means, of course, Christians. "We being many are one bread, and one body."

And again he means believers. He is not speaking of mankind in general. Let us never make the mistake of thinking that all men are included in the body of Christ, neither is it true that all believers in all ages have been included in the body of Christ. If I read my Bible correctly, the body of Christ came into existence on the day of Pentecost. There were believers in the world before that. There were one hundred and twenty of them gathered together that morning, but they were one hundred and twenty individuals, separate units, and the Holy Spirit came according to the Savior's promise and in a moment baptized those one hundred and twenty individuals into one, and made of them one body of which the risen glorified Christ is the Head. That body exists in the world today, and includes every one who all through the years since has put his trust in Christ.

The body as presented in Ephesians takes in all saints, living and dead, from Pentecost to the Rapture. The body as presented in 1 Corinthians takes in all saints upon the earth at a given moment of time. They are all members of the body of Christ. The body of Christ on earth is in the place of responsibility; the body of Christ in heaven, of course, is in the place where praise and thanksgiving alone prevail, for there is no longer the need of prayer because saints have passed beyond the bounds of responsibility. But how blessed to realize when we take the Lord's Supper that we are doing so as recognizing our unity with every fellow believer on the face of the earth. There is only one Lord's table in all the world. Wherever bread and the fruit of the vine are placed on a table in commemoration of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is the Lord's table, and Christians are responsible to behave themselves accordingly. The apostle emphasizes that when he points out that there are only two other tables. One is either at the Lord's table on earth, the table of Judaism, which is the fellowship of Israel, or the table of demons, which is the fellowship of idols.

"Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" He is referring to the peace offering. All in Israel had their title to participate when the peace offering was offered; that marked them out as a special communion. On the other hand, "The things that the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to [demons], and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." Idolatrous feasts and heathen festivals were all expressions of fellowship, just as the Lord's table is an expression of fellowship, or as the peace offering in Israel was an expression of fellowship. But these idolatrous festivals express fellowship with demons whether people realize it or not. I wish that the members of the Laymen's Appraisal Commission could get the meaning of this. They tell us that we make a great mistake in sending missionaries to heathen lands to draw a line of demarcation between heathenism and Christianity.

They say we should go to them and get all the good we can out of their religions, and then share with them what we have. “The things that the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to [demons], and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with [demons].” They may not realize it, but behind those idols, those images, there are demon powers controlling the hearts and minds of the people, and Christians are to be separated from everything like that.

“Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of [demons]: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of [demons].” And, let me say, you cannot be living for the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and be a partaker at the table of the Lord. You may sit in a church pew, and when the bread and wine are passed you may eat and drink of them, but you have not partaken of this fellowship, you cannot do it. You may in an outward sense take your place with Christians, but you know there is no real fellowship if you still belong to the world or love the world and its ways. It is the heart that is occupied with Christ that enjoys the sweetness and preciousness of fellowship at His table. “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of [demons].” If we attempt to do so, it would be as though we would try to provoke the Lord to jealousy.

A young man is engaged to a beautiful young woman. She does not know that his ways are very careless, and by-and-by she learns that while he comes to visit her and treats her with kindness and affection, on other nights he is out with other young women and is just as affectionate and free with them. He comes back to her as though nothing has happened. Do you think she would accept him on the same good terms? No, she would say, “You cannot go on with others if you expect me to be devoted to you alone.” And so our Lord has called us to proclaim our wholehearted devotion to Himself and thus our separation from the world that has rejected our Savior. Looked at from this standpoint how important the frequent celebration of the Lord’s Supper becomes.

The early Christians used to call this “The Sacrament.” Where did that term come from? The word *sacrament* was used for the oath of allegiance which the soldiers of the Roman legion took to their emperor. The early Christians said, “In a similar way every time we gather at the table of the Lord we renew our allegiance to our blessed Lord, we are confessing our devotion to Him who in grace gave Himself for us.” That is what makes this so precious in His eyes as we thus remember Him.

And so the believer, remembering he is always linked with the Lord’s table, that his behavior is to be in accordance with the Communion, should be careful as to how far he participates in things that worldlings think nothing of. “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for

me, but all things edify not." In other words, the believer is not put under rules and regulations, he is free and is at liberty to do the thing that he believes is right. Let him stop and ask the question in regard to a matter, "Will it edify, will it bless, will it help to make Christ more precious to me? Is there a possibility it may stumble any one else?" If it would not edify, it is something from which I must turn. I am not bound by these things, I am here to seek the blessing of others, not to do my own will.

The apostle says, as it were, "When you go into the market to buy, purchase what you will, take it home and eat it. If you are invited to a meal, feel perfectly free to go and eat what is placed before you. But if when you go to the market and are about to purchase your meat, the butcher should say, 'This has been dedicated to idols,' you say, 'We do not want it.' If you go out to dinner and your host should say, 'We are eating this today as dedicated to such and such a god,' you say, 'I cannot eat it with you because I am a partaker at the table of the Lord.'" We are not to make difficulties unnecessarily, but to be very careful of the consciences of other people. He does not want the butcher to be able to say, "I sold that Christian meat dedicated to Apollo, or to some other god; he evidently recognizes that there are other gods." He does not want that host to be able to say, "We thought him very narrow, we thought he recognized only Christ as God, but you see he partakes with us in the recognition of all our gods. He has so much more liberty than we thought." No, the apostle says, "Flee all that kind of liberty, be out-and-out for Christ; do not let any one have occasion to speak ill of that which you feel perfectly free to do."

"If I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" I am not to allow myself to partake of anything that would mislead those who are weak in the faith. Each believer is to act thus in good conscience toward God.

The conscience of a young person may be more active than some of the older folk think. Some of us get in the habit of speaking disparagingly of the young, and we would like to see them begin where we have left off. We have had to grow and they have to grow. Well, then, do not expect too much of young believers. Remember how you had to grow, you had to learn little by little what a poor, wretched thing this world is, and you had to learn how Christ could make up for everything else. They have to learn it too; give them credit for being just as honest as you were. They want to live for God, but they come to me and say, "What do you think of thus and so?" It is generally some kind of amusement. They ask, "Do you think that it is all right for a Christian?" And I always say, "My dear young brother, or my dear young sister, don't you think that you are

turning that around? Don't ask the question, 'Is there any harm in it?' but, 'Is there any profit in it? Will it really do me good? Would it be a blessing to me physically, spiritually, and in other ways? Will it help me to be a better testimony for Christ?' If so, do not be afraid of it. But if conscience says, 'It would not be profitable and it would not be a good testimony to others, it may mislead the weak, it will not lead me toward a deeper knowledge of Christ,' then say, 'I cannot, on the principle that the apostle lays down here, and I will avoid it.'" Let Christ be the one supreme Object of the devotion of your heart.

LECTURE 22

THE JEW, THE GENTILE, AND THE CHURCH OF GOD

1 Corinthians 10:31–33

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. (vv. 31–33)

These words form a fitting conclusion to the portion which we considered in our last study. Paul has just emphasized the behavior that should characterize those who are linked with the table of the Lord. A table is the expression of fellowship, there is no place where we enjoy one another's companionship so much as there. We sit down to partake of the good things provided, and there is a feast of reason and a flow of soul, and we find ourselves enjoying fellowship together.

In the spiritual sense there are three tables, representing three great fellowships in this world. First, there is the table of the Lord, and that represents Christian fellowship. As we have seen, the loaf and the cup upon that table speak of

the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus, and we being many, all who have been redeemed to God by the precious blood of our Savior, are members of one body and so partake together of that one communion feast. Then there is that which the apostle solemnly designates the table of demons. He is referring to heathen festivals, the kind of feasts held in those days, and that are still being held in pagan lands where devotees of idolatry gather together for fellowship in their abominably mysterious and unspeakably evil rites and ceremonies. Behind all this is the power of Satan. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to [demons], and not to God." In the third place there is what might be called the table of Israel. "Are not they that eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (v. 18). That was called the table of the Lord, but when the Lord Jesus was forsaken these forms and ceremonies became empty. Yet today we recognize that there is that fellowship in the world, a fellowship which is neither Christian on the one hand nor pagan on the other, the fellowship of the house of Israel. And now the apostle shows us that as Christians we are to live in this world having due regard to these different fellowships, seeking to bless all in each of these various circles.

First, we have our individual responsibility to order our lives to the glory of God. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." How far-reaching is this commandment. I wonder whether we always bear it in mind as we should. I am quite certain that many of us as Christians would live very different lives if we kept this admonition in mind, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." That takes in my entire life. A great many people try to live their lives in sealed compartments; there is one compartment for the church, there is another for the family, another for business, and another for pleasure and recreation, and the same man may seem to be an altogether different person in each one of these. When he comes to church he is the essence of sanctimoniousness, he has a long face and reverent mien as he sits in his pew. You would not think an unholy thought ever passed through his mind. His eyes are either uplifted to heaven or closed as if in rapt meditation. But see that same man during the week when he goes out into the world in business. Now his eyes are never closed, they are never lifted heavenward, but he is looking about him furtively in a most anxious way, and he is always interested in how he may make a dollar honestly or dishonestly. In fact, he sometimes does not "make" the dollars at all, he simply gets them. There is a great deal of difference between making money and getting money. We *make* money when we give a legitimate return for it; we *get* money without giving a legitimate return for it, and even professing Christians often engage in various

nefarious schemes that would not bear the test of the Word of God nor even a close application of the law of the land, in their efforts to get money. When they are questioned they say, "Well, you know what the Bible says, 'Not slothful in business.'" That is a Scripture that has made a great impression upon many minds. And then again this same man goes to his home, and there he is an altogether different person. In business he is so affable, at church so reverent and so solemn, but in his home where he feels he is best known he is sometimes anything but affable and solemn, he shows a miserably bad temper and is a kind of boor and makes everybody around him uncomfortable. You have possibly heard the story of the wife who said of her husband who was a preacher, "When I see him in the pulpit, I think he never ought to come out of it, and when I see his behavior at home, I think he never ought to go into it." There are many people like that, they live one way at home and altogether another outside. John Bunyan speaks of a man as a "devil at home and an angel abroad."

These same people have another compartment in their lives, and that is the one that has to do with their leisure time, their pleasure. It is amazing to see the very person who looks so serious on a Sunday morning make his way into some ungodly movie, or some other unholy place of amusement, on a weeknight. I wonder how people can attempt to combine the two, how there can be any respect whatever for the things of God if they go on with the vile, wicked amusements that so many are running after today. We are not to live our lives in these air-tight compartments, but are to do everything to the glory of God. If we gather with the people of God in the church services, it is that He may be glorified; if we go out to take our place in the business world, it is that we may bring glory to His name. A straightforward, upright, godly-living Christian businessman may be a far greater testimony for God than a preacher. Men expect the preacher to unfold the Word of God, but it often comes to them as a wonderful surprise when they see a business man living out the Word of God, and it appeals to them, it gives them to know that what the preacher declares is the right thing.

The home is the place where perhaps above every other a man may show what a Christian really should be, as in the presence of his wife and his children he manifests the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and seeks to lead those who are young in the ways that be in Christ. And then we come to his recreation, for a Christian needs recreation, a Christian has a body and a mind to be thought of, and needs to get out in the open and give a certain amount of time to that which is not so serious. But in his recreation he will say to himself, "I am still to have this in view, that I am to live to the glory of God, and whatever I do I must be

careful that I do not allow in myself anything, under the plea that it is simply pleasure or recreation, that would not have the approbation of the Lord Jesus Christ." We can easily make the test by saying, "If I do thus and so, would it disconcert me in the least if the Lord Jesus would suddenly appear, if He would look down upon me and say, 'What are you doing?'"

During my unconverted days I had never been in a theater, but some seven years after my conversion I got into a low backslidden state and I said, "I am going to find out what the theater is like." I felt like Moses before he killed that man, when he looked this way and that way to see if anybody was watching. I looked to the right and to the left, but I forgot to look up, for there was One watching me, the blessed Lord Jesus Himself. I paid for my ticket and went in and the miserable thing began. I had not been sitting there long until I seemed to hear a voice say, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and I thought, "Where does that come from? Oh, yes, I remember, that is in the Bible." It stirred me so I got up and ran from the place. If you cannot enjoy things with the Lord's approbation, then you had better avoid them.

If you want to be the kind of Christian who grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, you must order your life according to His Word. We have a similar verse to this in the epistle to the Colossians, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him" (3:17). If you call yourself a Christian, the next time you think of going to some ungodly place of worldly amusement, get down on your knees first and say, "Blessed God, in the name of the Lord Jesus I am going down to the movie theater—or whatever it may be—to see some of those ungodly Hollywood divorcees cavorting on the stage, and I pray that it may be for my spiritual blessing and that I may be enabled to glorify God." If you can pray that way without biting your tongue for being a hypocrite, you may go, but if you find you cannot pray like that, you had better give the place a wide berth.

I have heard Pastor D. H. Dolman tell that he was giving some addresses, before the world war, in a palace in Russia. He had been invited over from Germany by a Russian princess who was an earnest evangelical Christian. She had gathered together many of the old Russian nobility and it was to them Pastor Dolman was speaking. At one of his meetings he was talking of the Christian's attitude toward the world. A Grand Duchess was there and she was a professed Christian. At the close of the meeting, being a strong-minded lady, she spoke up and said, "I do not at all agree with some things that Pastor Dolman has said today."

He turned to her and said, "Your Imperial Highness, what have I said with which you disagree?"

"You said a Christian should not go to the theater, and I do not agree with you. I go to the theater, and I never go but what I get down on my knees first and say, 'I am going to the theater today, and I want Thee to go with me and protect me from all evil,' and He always does."

"Your Imperial Highness, may I ask you a question? Where did you get the authority to decide what you were going to do or where you were to go, and then ask the Lord to go with you in it? Why do you not wait until the Lord says to you, 'Grand Duchess, I am going to the theater tonight and I want you to come with Me,' and then follow Him to the theater?"

She threw up her hands and said, "Pastor Dolman has spoiled the theater for me, for if I wait for the Lord to bid me go, that time will never come!"

That is true of a great many other worldly places. Give the Lord the opportunity to guide you and He will lead your steps in the right way. You may say, "Oh, well; whose business is it how I behave?" That is something like the question Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" If you profess to be a Christian, there are a great many eyes fixed upon you, people are watching you to see what a Christian should be and they are judging your Master by your life, and if your life is worldly, mean, and ungodly, they decide that your Master is not the blessed, glorious, holy Christ that your lips tell them He is.

And so the apostle reminds us that there are three great classes of people who are looking on and he says, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." "Give none offence." He does not mean that we are not to offend any one, for it is impossible to keep from offending somebody. For instance, if I preach the Lord Jesus Christ, I offend my unbelieving neighbor. If I try to live for God, I offend people who do not want to live for God. If I stand against the liquor traffic, I offend all those engaged in that abominable business and who are interested in it from the standpoint of revenue. It is impossible for a Christian to live as he should without offending somebody, but the old English word *offend* has an altogether different meaning. The admonition may be translated, "Give no occasion to stumble," do not allow yourself in anything that would give another occasion to stumble because of your inconsistency.

"Neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." Here are the three classes into which the world is divided. The Jews of old, God's covenant people, the people to whom He gave the revelation of His Word and who preserved that revelation for us down through the centuries, the people to whom the Savior came—in fact, He was one of them, "Of whom as concerning the

flesh Christ came" (Rom. 9:5). But that people reading their own Scriptures fulfilled the predictions of the prophets in condemning and rejecting that Savior, and because they condemned and rejected Him God has set them to one side. He went out to die, sadly saying to Israel, "Your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:38–39). And so because of their awful sin in rejecting their promised Messiah they are scattered everywhere among the Gentiles today. It may be that I am addressing sons or daughters of Israel. Let me assure such that every honest Christian heart goes out in tender sympathy toward Israel, with yearning and longing for their salvation. We realize that Israel having been set to one side, great blessing has come to the Gentiles, the nations outside to whom we belong, but we desire that God's ancient people may share these blessings with us.

A Jewish lady once said to me, "If Jesus was the Messiah, the One predicted by our prophets, why is it that it is you Gentiles who seem to enjoy the blessings that Jesus brings while we are bereft of them?" I said, "My dear friend, the blessed Lord came and spread a table laden with all good things and said, 'I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' and He invited the people of Israel to come and partake of these good things, but they turned away and did not come; they rejected the Savior and the blessings He brought. It was then He threw open wide the door to the Gentiles and said, 'Come in, and take of the good things that Israel refused,' and that is why we have come in; but we still recognize Israel as God's ancient covenant people and know from the Word of God that the day is coming when their eyes will be opened and 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn' (Zech. 12:10). Meantime blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."

We as Christians are to live our lives consistently, carefully, before the Jew, we are to have consideration, we are to remember that judicial blindness has come upon him and are to commend our Christ to Israel by the godly lives that we live. I am afraid that some Jews might well be excused for rejecting Christ Jesus because of the behavior of those who profess to belong to Christ. Shame that it ever should be so.

Perhaps there never was a day when it was more important that real Christians should confirm their love toward Israel than the present one. There seems to be a rising tide of anti-Semitism sweeping all over the civilized world. To follow the writings of some, one might think that the Jew is responsible for all

our national and political ills. But we know who is responsible. Professing Christian people have turned away from the living God, have spurned His Word, have rejected His Son, have dishonored His Holy Spirit, and so God is giving the Christian nations of the world to feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the Lord their God. But Israel we know is blinded, and many of them have turned away from the God of their fathers, and instead of being a blessing to the world they are a curse. However, the great majority of them today are simple, kind, earnest people. How dare we try to blame on them the ills of the nations? We as Christians should show them that our hearts are toward them, and that we desire to have them share with us the blessings which we have found through the One who came from them, Jesus of Nazareth, the rightful King of the Jews.

But the apostle says, "Give no occasion to stumble, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles," the Christless nations all about us. Most of us are Gentiles by birth and at one time we were outside the covenants of promise, we were aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and today the great part of the Gentile world still remains in its ignorance and darkness and sin although nineteen hundred years have elapsed since the Lord Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). There are over a billion persons in this world today who are still without God and without hope. What a tremendous responsibility rests upon us as Christians to give the gospel to the Gentile world!. You do not need to go across the sea to do that, you work with them day by day, these Gentiles are all about you. How careful we should be to give no occasion to stumble.

I have said to some, "Are you a Christian?" They have answered, "No." "Wouldn't you like to be?" I have asked. "Well, I have sometimes thought so, but I have seen so many hypocrites among people professing to be Christians that I have not much interest." That is, of course, a very foolish excuse to make. It is as if I were to offer a man a ten-dollar bill and he said, "Thank you, but I have seen so many counterfeit bills I don't like to touch it." It would be a very foolish way of reasoning. I do not excuse any one for reasoning like that, for no one will talk that way in the day of judgment. When the Lord says, "Why didn't you trust Me?" no one will dare to look up and say, "I would have, but I saw so many hypocrites among those professing to be Christians." But on the other hand you and I are to be careful that there be no possibility of people getting a wrong conception of Christianity because our lives are not what they should be.

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." What is the church of God? This is a third company. There was a time

when the church of God had no existence. You remember when our Lord Jesus was on earth after Peter made his confession, He said, "Upon this rock I *will* build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). There was no church of God existing on the earth in the four Gospels, but when you come to the book of the Acts after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, you find a new company. The apostle Paul, when speaking of what he was in his unconverted days, says, "I persecuted the church of God and wasted it." And speaking to the Ephesian elders he says, "[Feed the flock of God], over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," and he calls it, "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Writing to Timothy long years afterward, he tells him how he ought to behave himself in the house of God and adds, "Which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). What is the church of God? In the first place, it is not a building in which we meet. When we speak of a church in that sense, we use the word colloquially. The church is the company of people who have been redeemed to God by the precious blood of His Son. At one time some of these people were Jews, in the beginning the great majority of them were Jews, and then God began to work in power among the Gentiles and the two together constituted the church of God, as it is written in Ephesians 3:6, "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." It was the Jew first and then the Gentile, and now all who believe form this wonderful company called the church of God. Let me ever remember as I walk down the street that I am a member of the church of God; as I meet with fellow Christians I am a member of the church of God; in my home life, in my business life, I am a member of the church of God. I cannot get out of the church, so I always have to behave as in church. Some people have one manner of behavior in what they call a church building and another outside. Parents will say to their children, "You must be good in church." Let me say to every Christian, You and I must always "be good," for we are always in church! We are members of the church of God, and we are to behave ourselves accordingly. "Giving none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."

Now see how the apostle says, as it were, "I am not asking you to do something that I do not ask myself to do." He was not one to say, "You do as I say and not as I do." "Even as I please all men in all things." Of course he uses the word *please* in the sense of seeking to profit all men. You cannot please them in the sense of doing that which every man wants you to do. If you did, you would not please God, but we are to behave ourselves properly toward others. "Even as I

please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." Why is it so important that I should behave myself aright as a Christian? Because others who are not saved are watching me, and if I am not careful my behavior will perhaps be such that they will never be saved. They will say, "No, I have no use for God, for Christianity. I have no use for the Bible, for I have been watching that man who professes to love God, to love Christ, and to honor the Bible, and I do not see anything in his life to commend either God or Christ or the Bible." We want to behave ourselves so that people looking at us will see Christ.

"That they may be saved." Well, then, there are some people not saved. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Scripture divides all mankind into two classes, the lost and the saved. Who are lost? Those who reject the gospel, those who live on in their sins and never come to Christ. Who are saved? Those who put their trust in Jesus, those who believe the gospel, those who come to Christ. My friend, are you lost or are you saved? Notice, it is "*are* lost," not merely in danger of being lost, but you are lost now if you have not trusted Christ. If you are lost, you may be saved, and you may be saved now.

THE VEILED WOMAN

1 Corinthians 11:1–16

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but

all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God. (vv. 1–16)

In our study of this epistle we have noticed that in the first six chapters the apostle brings before the Corinthian church certain matters that require correction and instruction. We can be very thankful that God providentially permitted so many things to come up in the early church in order that they might be corrected by apostolic authority during that first century of the Christian era, because similar things come up continually in the churches of God down through the years. The remarkable fact is that there are no circumstances that can arise, no sins that may cause trouble and distress, no irregularities that may appear, that are not already met and provided for right here in the epistles of the New Testament. Because these things were rife in the beginning of the church's history they were met by the Holy Spirit through inspired man, and all we need to do today is to walk in obedience to the Word.

In those first six chapters the apostle deals with such questions as divisions among Christians, schisms of various kinds, immorality getting into the church of God, Christians going to law one with another, and other things that disturb the peace of the church.

Beginning with chapter 7 and going right on to the end of the epistle, Paul takes up certain things concerning which the church wrote for instruction and help. He says in the opening verse of chapter 7, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me," and he deals first with the question of marriage and divorce, the relationship of a Christian wife to a heathen husband or a Christian husband to a heathen wife. And then in chapters 8 and 9 he takes up the question of meats offered to idols and the Christian's relationship to idol temples. He carries that on over into chapter 10 and shows how carefully the Christian ought to walk apart from everything that savors of idolatry.

And now in chapter 11 he touches on another problem that was disturbing the early church. In order to properly understand this portion we need to try to visualize conditions existing in those distant days. Corinth was a very loose, a very dissolute city. I question if any of the great cities in which the apostle preached the gospel were worse in character in this respect than the city of Corinth. We are rapidly getting into the same condition, for we are living in a day when

everything like purity and chastity is looked upon as a joke, and people are utterly cynical and indifferent in regard to personal morality. The literature of our day reeks with filth and impurity, pictures are vile and lewd, theaters and movies, they tell me, are characterized by the same thing. Low ideas of morals and behavior are prevalent. Corinth was a city in which this could be seen at the very worst.

In that city looseness of every kind had to be faced by the early church, and the apostle was desirous that Christian women should not permit anything in their behavior that would allow the least cloud upon their purity. Loose women in those days went bareheaded, and were found in the streets unblushingly seeking those who might be companions with them in their sin and wickedness. Women who sought to live in chastity and purity were very particular never to appear in public unveiled. The unveiled woman was the careless woman, the immoral woman; the veiled woman was the careful wife or mother who was concerned about her character and her reputation. It would seem that after Christianity came to Corinth and converted women rejoiced in a liberty they had never known in the old pagan days, that some of them were inclined to be rather careless and indifferent as to the customs of the day and were saying perhaps, "We are all one in Christ; Paul himself has taught us that in the new creation there is neither male nor female, and so there is no reason now why Christian women should be subject to any of the conventionalities of the day. We can go unveiled and bareheaded in public places, and we need not be concerned about it." The Corinthians wrote to Paul to get his judgment in this matter and this is his answer, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." In other words, I am about to give you instruction, instruction which I have a right to give as a divinely appointed apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. I seek in all things to be subject to Christ. When He speaks, I endeavor to obey. Now, in what I am going to put before you I trust you will have the same spirit, that you will seek to follow me in this, to be led by me as I seek to be led by the Lord Jesus Christ. In all matters in which you have been obedient to the instructions formerly given, I praise you—"I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." He was the one who under God had founded the church at Corinth. He had given instruction ere leaving them as to how things should be carried on, and though now he had to touch on a rather delicate subject and one which some among them might resent, he first of all gave them credit for all their past obedience to the instruction they had received.

When he says, "And keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you," he is not simply referring to the two Christian ordinances, baptism and the Lord's

Supper, though these would certainly be included. It is unthinkable that any subject Christian should ever set to one side these ordinances of the Christian church, but the word here has a much wider meaning than that. It refers to the instruction given to them regarding a great many things which have to do with the happy fellowship of saints. A little while ago these people had been idolaters, led by Satan, captive at his will; now they were redeemed and seeking to walk together in Christian fellowship. There must be subjection to the revealed will of God in order to have happy fellowship in the church.

He now takes up this question of woman's place in nature and in the church, and I wish you would bear in mind that he is not speaking, as he does elsewhere, of woman's place in the new creation. In the new creation, as already intimated, there are no distinctions. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). We are all one in Christ. We were all sinners alike, we have all been redeemed alike, we are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit alike, we have all been baptized into one body alike, and so all these distinctions vanish and we think of one another as members of Christ. But this does not alter the fact that we still have our place in nature and must maintain that place. The Christian is not to be careless as to his responsibilities. You will see how important this is if I illustrate in this way: According to the Word of God I am a heavenly citizen. Suppose I say, "Inasmuch as I am a heavenly citizen, I have no responsibilities to any country here on earth," I will soon have to reckon with the income tax collector and other authorities. I will soon find out that though I may pride myself on being a citizen of heaven only and may say that I have no responsibilities here, the governors of this world are not satisfied to have it so and I shall have to learn by experience that I have responsibilities, I have earthly relationships that must be maintained. Just so, although there is neither male nor female in the new creation, yet we have our places to fill in nature and in the church.

"I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Somebody may say, "But is not Christ the head of every woman?" Yes, in the new creation Christ is the Head, and men and women are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, but this verse emphasizes the fact that it is not that of which he now speaks. In creation the Head of every man is Christ. When God made man He said, "Let us make man in our image," and He had Christ in view, and when the first man came into the world, he came as the type of Him which was to come. And so the Head of every man is Christ, and man is to be subject to Christ and to represent Christ. But God did not leave man alone in the world; He said, "I

will make him an helpmeet,” and so He created woman and said to the woman, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). He gave Eve to Adam, and she saw in Adam her head, and that relationship still exists. The head of woman is the man. I suspect there are some women in our modern day who would resent that, they would like to make the head of the man the woman. They resent the thought that God has given to woman anything that looks like a subject or inferior place. Let us put aside any thought of inferiority. The point is that it is the responsibility of the husband to care for and to protect the wife—“Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel” (1 Peter 3:7). The woman, when she agrees to take a man’s name, tacitly consents to what we have here. Some extremely modern women do refuse to take their husbands’ names. They say, “We will not subject ourselves in any way, as we would in taking a man’s name.” I would say to you, young women, if you have any thought of getting married, do not marry a man until you are willing to accept him as your head and take his name. Otherwise it is far better that you should remain single where you can run things to suit yourself!

“The head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” Why does he bring Christ in here? I take it that someone might say, “But I refuse to take that place of subjection,” and he would say, “Remember, the Lord Jesus took that place. He humbled Himself, but it is His glory to be in that place.” When the Son of God became Man, He took the place of subjection which He will keep for all eternity—“The Head of Christ is God.”

And then he says, “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.” Notice how he meets their difficulty. If a man should stand up in public to pray or to preach (the word *prophesieth* really means “preach”), wearing a covering on his head, he would be dishonoring his Head. Not that which is above his neck, but dishonoring his Head which is Christ. If I stood in this pulpit preaching with my hat on, every one of you would rightfully say, “Has he no respect for the Master whom he professes to serve?” I come into the presence of God and Christ and of the angels who are learning the wisdom of God in the church, and I remove my hat. For the same reason when a woman comes into the church, she keeps her hat on. “Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head.” Who is her head? The man. She shows by uncovering her head that she wants to be like the man; she dishonors her head when she says, “I am not going to take any subject place, I have as much right to have my hat off in a public meeting as a man.” It does not say that

she dishonors the Lord Jesus Christ. She may be quite unconscious of dishonoring any one, but I am giving what the Word of God says.

Concerning this and other matters it has well been said, "Some things are commanded because they are right, other things are right because they are commanded." "Thou shalt not steal." The commandment did not make it wrong to steal, it was always wrong to steal. "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered." This is right because it is commanded. God has spoken and it is very often in little things like this that we test our state, whether there is self-will working or whether one is ready to be subject to the Word of God.

In that pagan city it would have been a great shame and disgrace for a woman to have appeared in public with her head uncovered, it would have marked her out as an immoral person. Of course we must recognize that customs change, but nevertheless the principle of this chapter abides. God is calling Christian women to modesty of deportment, that in this way they may be distinguished from worldly women. Here he says, "If the woman be not covered" (the word is really "veiled"), if she does not have a veil covering her hair, let her come out and be just like a man. Let her go to the barber shop and have her beautiful locks all shorn, as many do today. I do not understand why women want to be so man-like. I think a womanly woman is one of the sweetest and most beautiful creatures God ever made. I like a womanly woman and a manly man, but I wonder if any one really admires a manly woman or a womanly man! Let each one hold to his proper place in creation, but if not willing to cover her head, let the woman come out and be shorn and shaven.

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God." God had said, "Let us make man in our image." "But the woman is the glory of the man." She is of so much finer character than the man, she is so superior to the man in many ways that he feels ashamed to see her getting out of her place and lowering herself by trying to take the place of a man. I wonder sometimes whether women have any idea how even worldly men express their disgust in the days in which we live at the manlike behavior of women in public places. I have been on railroad trains, in hotels or restaurants, and when women have, for instance, taken out a cigarette and begun to smoke, I have heard even unsaved men say, "What are we coming to? I am glad I did not have a mother like that." Even unsaved men hate to see women copying men, and Christian women should be absolutely above reproach.

“For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.” The woman was taken from man. An old writer says, “When God created man, He made him of the dust of the ground; when He created woman, He took her from the man. He did not take her from his head in order that she might lord it over him; He did not take her from his feet that he might trample upon her, but He took her from his side, close to his heart, in order that she might be his companion and that he might love and care for her.” And so we read, “Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.”

Passing over the tenth verse for a moment and continuing with the eleventh, we read, “Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man [through creation], even so is the man also by the woman [through birth]; but all things of God.” So every one has his place to fill in creation and none can take the place of the other.

What about that tenth verse which comes in parenthetically? “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.” This is admittedly a somewhat difficult verse. In the margin of our Bibles we have, “power—in sign that she is under the power or authority of her husband.” I think that marginal note was probably put in by some worthy brother in years gone by who may have had a little difficulty in maintaining his position as head of the house! I question that this is what it means. You see, if a woman in a city like Corinth appeared in a public place with uncovered head, it would at once expose her to insult. Therefore, when going shopping or visiting her friends or going to the Christian services, she put the veil, the covering, over her head and walked down the street unmolested. Her covering was her power. I spent the first six years of my Christian experience as an officer in the Salvation Army. In those days I often had occasion to see how that beautiful little blue bonnet was the power of the Salvation Army lassie. I remember going into a saloon on the Barbary Coast in San Francisco seeking the lost. Two of our Salvation Army lassies appeared, and I noticed that everybody treated them respectfully and nicely excepting one man, a half-drunken sailor. When the Salvation Army girl approached him with her paper, he turned toward her and made a movement as though he would have kissed her, and in a moment as she drew back five of those ungodly men sprang to their feet, knocked him down, thrashed him within an inch of his life, and then threw him out into the gutter for the police. Her bonnet was her power on her head. There were lots of other girls there, God help them, that nobody would have fought for or protected. There they were with their brazen faces and uncovered heads, but this little lassie’s power was her

bonnet, and so the apostle is saying, "Women, you are not belittling yourselves, you are not degrading yourselves when you show proper respect by appearing in public places with your heads covered. You are simply availing yourself of that which is your protection against insult."

But what does the expression, "Because of the angels" mean? It is a little difficult to know, after nineteen centuries, just what was in the mind of the apostle. Did he mean, as many think, that whenever the Christian company are gathered together, God's holy angels in heaven are looking down with delight upon the scene, and that they note everything that savors of subjection and obedience to the Word of God, note it with approval, but also observe with disapproval everything that savors of self-will and insubjection? We are told that angels are learning the wisdom of God in us, that is, in the church, and so the apostle may be saying, "Let the angel hosts see in Christian women a reverence, a modesty, and a respect for holy things which is not found in the women of the world." If that is the meaning, it is very beautiful. We read of one class of those holy angels called the seraphim. Every one had six wings, "with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." Angels cover their faces in the presence of God and the angels looking down see the covered women sitting in reverence and modesty in the presence of God, and approve. That may be the meaning.

William Thomson in his volume, *The Land and the Book*, points out that ever since the days of the apostle John the word *angel* has been used for a minister in the church, and in some eastern churches the ministers are still called the angels of the churches. In those oriental lands even until very recent times the women and men were segregated as they gathered together that there might be nothing to disturb the equanimity of the men. But the "angel" stood on a platform and saw both groups, and Dr. Thomson points out that practically none of these angels had ever looked upon the uncovered face of a woman except his mother or sister or some other near relative, and he says that no one who has not seen for himself conditions under which they work can understand why the apostle should tell Christian women that they should keep their faces veiled because of the angels or ministers. He would be so disconcerted by looking into the unveiled faces of so many women that he might get his mind off from his message! This is at least most suggestive.

"Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" Should she not take that reverent attitude? It is perfectly right for me to pray with my head uncovered, but a woman is to cover her head as a sign of reverent subjection.

And now he goes back to nature and says, “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? but if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.” Somebody says, “That settles the question. Her hair is her covering.” But the apostle says that if she is not veiled she is to let her hair be shorn. She has that natural covering which distinguishes her from man and over that she puts a veil. Why? Because her hair is her glory. Is not that most striking? In the presence of God she covers her chief beauty in order that no mind may be turned from Christ to her beautiful hair. It is precious to think of Mary of Bethany and of the poor woman in Luke 7 who washed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with their hair. They cast their glory at His feet.

In closing he says, “If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God”—if people are going to make a fuss about a matter of this kind, all I have to say is we have no such custom. If women will persist in being disorderly in this way, you cannot discipline them, you cannot put them out of the church. I have laid down God’s Word, now let women settle it themselves as to how far they will subject themselves to the Word of the living God.

What is the real importance of this? It is the test of whether our wills are subject to God or whether we are going to be subject to the fashions and order of the day in which we live. The Christian is one who has forsaken the world for Christ’s sake, has turned his back on the fashion of this world that passeth away in order that he may subject himself to Another, even the Lord from heaven, and I do beg of you, my brother and sister, remember the word, “Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.” You settle it with God as to just how far a passage like this, having to do with customs of long ago, still has authority over your conscience at the present time, but do not go beyond conscience. Seek to be obedient in all things to the Word of the living God, for this is the path of blessing.

LECTURE 24

THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 Corinthians 11:17–26

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For

as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. (vv. 17–26)

We have here perhaps the fullest instruction concerning the correct observance of the Lord's Supper that is given us in Scripture. It is very evident that it was intended to occupy a very large place in the hearts and minds of Christians during the dispensation in which our blessed Lord is absent in body, sitting on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. It was intended to call Him very vividly to mind in order that His people might be so occupied with Him that, as they went forth afterward in service, Christ Himself might be the joy of their hearts. Apparently at a very early day Christians began to misunderstand the Lord's Supper.

It is rather a sad commentary upon our fallen human nature that everything God has given us has been abused by man. No physical appetites that He has given have not been abused, and there are very few privileges we have that have not often been misused. Under law, God gave Israel the Sabbath, and you would think that men would have recognized in that a part of His gracious provision for the comfort of His creatures when He said, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God" (Exod. 20:9–10). But the Sabbath became a loathing to many people because they connected with it all kinds of laws and prohibitions which God Himself had not put upon it, so that our Lord Jesus had to reprove the men of His day by saying, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). And so it is with other observances in Old Testament times.

The same is true in connection with the two ordinances of the Christian church, the Lord's Supper and baptism. They were designed to continue in the church until the end of the present age, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him. But people either go to the extreme of making these ordinances saving sacraments or are inclined to become very careless about them. The fact is that neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper has anything to do with the salvation of our souls, except that they picture the way in which we are saved—through the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet they are of great importance because they help to draw our hearts out to Him and to give us a more vivid realization of our identification with Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

In the early church the Lord's Supper was observed very frequently; for a time at least it was observed every day. In the early chapters of Acts it is set forth that they daily participated in the breaking of bread. Afterward it was

observed on the first day of the week, as Acts 20:7 would seem to show. I am sure that the oftener we gather together "to show the Lord's death until he come," the greater blessing comes to us and the greater glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet in the early church they fell into ways in which this ordinance was abused. The apostle, for instance, writing here says he cannot praise them for the way they attempted to celebrate the Lord's Supper—"I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse." It is possible then even to assemble to celebrate the Lord's Supper and go away not benefited but rather harmed. How was it that they were celebrating it for the worse rather than for the better? In the first place there was a spirit of faction working among them. Instead of recognizing that the Lord's Supper speaks of the unity of the whole church of God, and that all alike participate in that one loaf and cup which set forth the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Corinthians were grouping together, in one place, it is true, but under various heads. Some said, as it were, "I am of Paul, the teacher; I am of Apollos, the preacher; I am of Cephas, the exhorter," and some said, "We do not recognize these gifts at all, we are only of Christ." It is just as bad to make Christ's name the head of a party as any other name. Christ is the Head of all believers and not merely of some little group. "When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved [of yourselves] may be made manifest among you." You are making a great deal of leaders instead of being taken up with Jesus Christ.

Then too they were linking the *agapē*, the love feast of which Jude speaks, with the Lord's Supper. Many of these early Christians were slaves and could not get away from their duties very often. When they came together, they evidently put in just as many hours as they could, and so brought their food with them and between gatherings they would spread it out and partake together. They fell into the habit of linking the Lord's Supper with this fellowship. Some had a great deal to partake of while others had nothing; some drank even to inebriation, and some were left without enough for their needs. "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?" The rich spread feasts while the poor were left without anything, and so he says, "It is far better to do your eating at home." He is not insisting that it is wrong for Christians to come together for love-feasts, for Jude speaks of these, but if it is a question of separating believer

from believer, it is far better to eat at home. "What shall I say to you?" he asks; "shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

Having reproved them for their misbehavior at the Table, he lays down clearly the revelation that the risen Christ gave him from heaven concerning the proper observance of this service. First, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." Paul never knew the Lord here on earth, he was not with the Twelve in the upper room when Jesus instituted this ordinance; therefore, he must have received this as a direct revelation from heaven. That is very significant, for there must be something extremely precious to our risen Savior about the frequent observance of the Lord's Supper if He, the glorified One, gave to His apostle a special declaration from the glory regarding it. And this is what He told him: "That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread." Why does the apostle slip in the expression, "In which he was betrayed," if not for us to realize that the Lord's Supper was meant to appeal to the hearts of His people and so to remind them that in that very night when our blessed Savior was to know to the fullest the untrustworthiness, the wickedness, the treachery, the perfidy of the human heart, He gave this feast in order that His people might have before them the continual expression of His loving heart in giving Himself for them.

There is something very tender here. "The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread." Judas evidently was not present when He did this. There is a question as to that, but if you follow carefully through the accounts in the different Gospels, I think you will see that Judas was present at the Passover Feast, but when that was concluded, the Savior said, "That thou doest, do quickly. . . . [And] he . . . went immediately out: and it was night" (John 13:27, 30). Jesus had said before, "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table" (Luke 22:21). But Judas went out, and in his absence the Savior gave this memorial feast to His own. That is very suggestive, for it is only for those who have been redeemed by His precious blood that the Lord's Supper is given. It is not for the unsaved, it is not for those who are hoping to be saved; it is for those who are in the joy of accomplished redemption, who know Christ as Savior. To them the Lord spake when He took that bread and gave thanks and said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."

Some tell us that the Lord meant that the bread and the wine are changed into the actual body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ when we give thanks to God for it. Others say this is not true, but that when you receive the bread in some special sense you are actually receiving the body of Christ. I do not think it

necessary to go into these various views, for the Lord sat at that table in His complete human body and did not divide that among the disciples. When He took the loaf and said, "This is my body," His own hands held that loaf, so it seems to me the simple and clear meaning is that it in the bread on the Lord's table we have set forth in picture the precious, holy body of our Lord Jesus Christ. But it certainly is true that as we receive that bread with honest sincere hearts, with minds occupied with Christ, we do receive our blessed Lord in faith in a sense that is not true at other times. Thus far we are willing to go with the sacramentalists. It is a memorial, and it is one that makes Christ very real to us and gives a very definite sense of His presence.

A member of a great church in Christendom said to me at one time, "We believe in the real presence of the Savior in the sacrament, and you believe in His real absence." "Oh, no," I said, "you are mistaken. We simply do not believe that the bread and the wine are actually changed into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ, but we do believe in the real presence in Spirit of our blessed Lord, for He has said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'" (Matt. 18:20). And there is no time when Christ's presence is so definitely realized and so distinctly felt as when remembering Him in the breaking of bread. He said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." The Lord's Supper is a continual reminder of the vicarious character of His death, and that is one reason why our blessed Lord is so desirous that it should be celebrated frequently.

Then we read, "After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." On every table where there stands a glass of wine (I do not speak now of whether it be fermented or unfermented), the fruit of the vine, partaken of by the people of God, it is a standing testimony to the fact that redemption is alone through His precious atoning blood. If people deny the vicarious character of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot understand how with consistency they can participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper for, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do [proclaim] (the word translated 'show,' is elsewhere in the New Testament translated 'preach') the Lord's death till he come." Wherever Christians eat this bread and drink this cup, participating in the Lord's Supper, they are preaching a sermon. By their very actions they are declaring that His death was not merely that of a martyr for righteousness' sake, but that it was death as a sacrifice, that He died for sinners, that He shed His blood for sinners.

A dear Japanese man who attended some of our meetings in Sacramento, California, was troubled about his soul, but it seemed impossible to bring him to Christ because of his love for money. He would say, "If I accept this Jesus as my Savior, I do not see how I can make money."

So we told him he would have to make the choice of being rich on earth and poor in eternity, or poor on earth and rich in eternity. When I use the pronoun "we," I refer to a Japanese evangelist who was associated with me at the time, and through whom I met this man. A year went by, I returned to the city of Sacramento for meetings, and one night was preaching the gospel on the street corner. In the audience I saw this little Japanese man. There was an expression of concern on his face that stirred my heart. At the close of the meeting he stepped up and shook my hand and said, "I so glad to see you again."

I said, "And so am I glad to see you. Have you accepted Christ as your Savior yet?"

Tears filled his eyes and he said, "No, I fight against Him. I cannot give up. If I accept Him, I cannot make money. Do you have some meetings here where you are speaking?"

I said, "Yes," and told him where the meetings were being held.

He said, "Do you have a meeting on Sunday where you eat the bread and drink the wine showing how Jesus died?"

I said, "Yes, next Sunday morning."

"I come," he said.

So on the Sunday morning we had gathered together to participate in the Lord's Supper, and as the meeting commenced this Japanese man came in and sat close up in the front. I was praying that God might speak to him, and as the meeting went on it was evident that he was greatly perturbed. Finally the people of God partook of the bread and the fruit of the vine, and this heathen Japanese sat and looked on. Just as the elements were replaced on the table, he rose and said, "I like to pray."

I thought, "My! I wish I had told him that he would not be expected to take part in the meeting!"

But he prayed like this: "O God, I all broke up. For one whole year I fight You. I fight You hard. Your Spirit break me all to pieces. O God, today I see Your people eating the bread, drinking the wine, tell how Jesus died for sinners like me. O God, You love me so You give Your Son to die for me. I cannot fight You any more. I give up, I take Him as my Savior."

It did not spoil our meeting at all to have him take part with such a prayer. We realized that this simple ordinance had preached to him for, "As often as ye

eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do [*preach*] the Lord's death till he come." At the close of the meeting we gathered about him to rejoice with him, and then he turned to me and said, "Jesus say before He go away, when you believe Him, you bury in water, show old life gone, new life begin. I like bury."

"You want to be baptized?" I asked. "I will see you during the week and perhaps we can do it next Sunday."

Referring to the Japanese evangelist, he said, "A year ago he tell me Jesus Christ coming back again, so?"

"Yes," I said, "that is true."

"He coming soon?"

"He may."

"He not come before next Sunday?"

"Well, I couldn't say, He might come before then."

"Then I no like to wait till next Sunday, I like show I no fight any more, I like be buried today."

I said, "Forgive me for trying to put it off; we will go down to the river this afternoon."

And so in the afternoon he came dressed in his best with the Japanese mayor, as we called the richest man in the Japanese settlement, and forty other Japanese merchants behind him. We preached the Word and he gave his testimony, and then he was buried in the waters of baptism.

The Lord's Supper, if given the place our Savior intended it to have, will constantly preach to the world, and will say more than any words of ours can say: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do [*preach*] the Lord's death till he come."

You may have known the Lord Jesus Christ for years, but I wonder whether this ordinance is precious to you. I am afraid to some it is just a legal thing, a feeling that one ought to come and take the Lord's Supper because He has commanded it. Let me suggest that it is not so much a command as a request. When our Savior says, "This do in remembrance of me," He does not mean, "You must do this," but rather, "I would like to have you do this." It is as though a loved one were dying and before slipping away should call the children around the bed and handing each one of them a photograph would say, "Here are pictures of myself; I am going to leave you, you won't see me again for a little while, but I would like each of you to take one of these pictures. I wish you would cherish it and from time to time take it out and look at it, and as you do, remember me." Would it be a task to do that in response to the request of a loving mother or a precious father or possibly a darling child? Surely not. If you loved that one, you

would be delighted again and again to take down that picture and as you looked at it, you would say, "There is the one who loved me and is now gone from me, but I am so glad in this way I can call my dear one afresh to mind." That is the place the Lord's Supper has in the church of God. There is nothing legal about it, you do not have to participate in the Lord's Supper if you do not want to. You can go to heaven by trusting the Savior even if you have never once partaken of the cup that speaks of His suffering and death, but if your heart is filled with love for Him, you will be glad from time to time to gather with His people to remember Him. If you are unsaved, you may have thought of the Lord's Supper as a means whereby you might obtain salvation. Perhaps you have come to the Communion Table and hoped that thereby you might obtain the evidence that your sins were forgiven. My dear friend, the message of the Lord's Supper is this, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and . . . was buried, and . . . rose again" (1 Cor. 15:3). What you need is not an ordinance, for the sacrament cannot save you, but you need the blessed Savior Himself; you need to trust the One whose death is pictured in the Lord's Supper, the Savior who gave Himself for you.

LECTURE 25

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-JUDGMENT

1 Corinthians 11:27–34

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come. (vv. 27–34)

We have in the two Christian ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, two witnesses to the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, His vicarious atoning

death, which our Lord has set in His church to be observed until the end of the age, until He shall return. In these ordinances we have constant testimony to the death that our Savior died on Calvary. Baptism is the initiatory ordinance of the Christian faith; the Lord's Supper is to be observed frequently throughout the believer's life until he shall see his Savior face to face.

We come now to consider the portion beginning with verse 27 which deals with the state and condition of believers as they approach the Table of the Lord. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Very solemn words these. They should surely put a check upon the carelessness and the levity of our hearts. How often some of us have been guilty of approaching the Table of the Lord in a very careless spirit, and perhaps with considerable levity, forgetting that we have here something which in the eyes of God is most sacred, most holy.

What does it mean to eat the bread and to drink the cup unworthily? A misapprehension of this term, "*unworthily*," has kept some conscientious people from ever approaching the Table. They reason like this, "I never can be sure that I am worthy. I know my Savior is worthy, that all holiness, all purity, all goodness are His, but I am so conscious of the impurities that surge up from my own evil heart, I am so conscious of my frequent failure in thought, word, and deed, that if it is a question of worthiness I dare not come to the Table of the Lord, I dare not receive those sacred elements, for I am very far from being worthy." Let me say to you, my conscientious friend, that the word here is not "unworthy," but is rather "*unworthily*," referring not to the person, but to the state of mind in which one comes to the Table of the Lord. Of course in ourselves we are altogether unworthy, but we have found acceptance in the worthy One, and in Christ every believer is worthy to approach the Table of the Lord. I remember reading of an aged saint oppressed by a sense of his unworthiness. He bowed weeping as the sacred emblems were going around and refused to touch the bread. When the deacon offered it, he sobbed, "I am too great a sinner to receive that which is so holy," and the aged Highland minister exclaimed, "Take it, mon, take it; it is for sinners and for none else that Jesus died." Oh, yes, my very acknowledgment of my sinfulness is that which gives me the right to come because, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). If I truly feel my sinfulness, confess it, and put my trust in the Savior of sinners, then in Him I find my worthiness.

But here it is not an adjective, it is an adverb, "*unworthily*." It refers, you see, to manner or behavior. What is the meaning? If I come to the Table of the Lord in a light, frivolous, careless way; if, as the bread and the wine are being prayed

over, I am thinking of a thousand and one other things, perhaps occupied with the business of the week, or recalling the latest foolish story I have heard; if when the bread and the cup are actually passed to me, I am not thinking of the Savior of whom they speak, but perfunctorily participating in it as a religious ordinance, I am taking the loaf and the cup unworthily. Or perhaps I come altogether unprepared, I have spent no time with God in the morning thinking of the solemnity of all this, I rush into His presence bringing strange fire, as it were, and I fail to recognize that in the loaf and the cup we have set forth the precious body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. To partake in such a spirit is to do so unworthily. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." It is as though I crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame in forgetting that it was my sins that caused His death upon the cross. I act as though He had never yet died. I fail to realize what these symbols set forth.

Then am I to remain away from the Table? Not if I am a Christian. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Observe, it does not say, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him refrain from participating," but, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." No matter what he sees in himself of that which is evil and unholy, if he judges himself before God and confesses his own unholiness, he is in a state of soul where he is free to participate in this sacred service. In other words, he is to come into the presence of God with self-judgment. He who does not do this "eateth and drinketh damnation [or judgment] to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." He only exposes himself the more to divine judgment because of his frivolous behavior.

You say, "In what sense does he fail to discern the Lord's body?" Let me illustrate in this way. How frequently we have gone to a funeral service and have seen before us the casket containing all that was mortal of some loved one. What a solemn time it was. What would you think of some light, flippant person coming into such a service and perhaps hardly taking his seat before he leans over to the person next to him and says, "By the way, I heard a most amusing story; let me tell it to you while we wait for the minister to begin." Every respectable person would look upon him with indignation and say, "What is the matter with the foolish man? Does he fail to discern the body of our dear one lying there?" The bread and wine upon the Table of the Lord set forth the precious body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and any one coming into such a scene carelessly, failing to discern the Lord's body, does not recognize that this is a memorial of death, this is a remembrance of the One who died for our sins.

Because these Corinthians had allowed themselves to become very careless in this matter the apostle says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Just what does he mean? What does the word *sleep* mean? If you go through the Epistles of Paul carefully, you will see that it is a term used over and over again for the death of the believer. It is not the sleep of the soul, but the sleep of the body. When the believer dies, the spirit is absent from the body and present with the Lord. Let me direct your attention to that lovely word in the third chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians where it says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named." Notice this, "the whole family." By this he means all of God's children, the entire redeemed family. And where does he locate the family? Part of it in heaven and part on earth. If Saint Paul were a "soul sleeper," he would have said, "Of whom the whole family in the grave and on earth is named." But he did not think of our departed loved ones in Christ as being in the grave, but in heaven. Elsewhere in Scripture we find that death for the believer is "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better," and yet the word "sleep" is used many times, but only in reference to the body. The tired, weary bodies of believers are put to sleep to rest until awakened on the resurrection morning.

It is a blessed thing to sleep in Christ, and yet there is such a thing as a believer being put to sleep before his due time. We read, "The ungodly shall not live out half their days," and it is quite true that even godly persons may so fail, so fall into sin, that God may not permit them to live on to a green old age, but may take them home in youth or in middle life. I would not say that when a young believer dies it is always an act of discipline, for many a young saint has been taken away from the evil to come, in grace rather than in judgment. Some ripen earlier than others, some of us develop so slowly it will take fifty or sixty or seventy years to bring us to spiritual maturity, but there are others like Borden of Yale who ripen so young that the Lord can say, "I am going to pluck that fruit and take it home to heaven, it is ready early." On the other hand, very frequently early death is an evidence of the Lord's discipline. That is what Paul is saying to the Corinthians, "You have been dishonoring me at the Table of the Lord, approaching it in a light frivolous manner; you have been given to levity and have misused this sacred ordinance and mingled it with a feast for yourselves. Therefore, many of you are weak, many of you are sickly, and many of you sleep." Sickness is one way by which the Lord often chastens His people. Chastening is not necessarily punishment, but it is educational, and the Lord uses sickness in order to bring us to realize our littleness, our insufficiency, and the importance

of living only for eternity. Many a young or middle-aged Christian has gone on perhaps for years without much recognition of the Lord's authority over his life, and then sickness has come, and for long weary weeks or months and sometimes years that dear one has been laid aside. At first very restlessly he has asked, "O God, why do I have to suffer? Why cannot I go out to enjoy things with others?" But little by little there comes a change, and by-and-by there is a chastened spirit, and the sick one says, "Lord, perhaps Thou hast lessons to teach me which I would not learn while in health and strength; make me a ready pupil in Thy school," and God uses the chastening to lead that believer into deeper fellowship with Himself. It is a very serious thing to be under the hand of God in chastening. I am afraid that some of us are more or less under it almost all our days because we are so slow to learn our lessons, so self-willed; it takes us so long to get to the place where we judge ourselves in the presence of God so that His hand may be lifted.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." This is a call to self-judgment. But how am I to judge myself? By bringing my inmost thoughts, my ways, my outward behavior into the light of the Word of God and asking myself, "Are these thoughts of mine, is this behavior of mine, in accordance with what is here written?" And if I find that there is something in which I am continuing, certain ambitions I am cherishing that are contrary to the Word, if I find that this Word has something to say to me personally about my thoughts and ways, then I am to turn to God and confess my failure, acknowledge my sin, and seek by His grace to walk in obedience to His Word. And as I thus judge myself I come out from under the place of discipline, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

In regard to this matter of self-judgment, God's Word should always be the standard of judgment. He says something in His Word and I say, "Oh, yes, I see it there on the page of the Bible, but certainly it has no application to me." Yet it is God's direct Word to my soul, and I am putting away a good conscience, and so I need not expect to hear Him speak to me again until I am ready to listen to Him in this matter. Why should He reveal other things to me when I refuse to bow to Him in this? When you read the Bible, do you read it to become acquainted with it as literature, to become familiar with its history, its philosophy, to derive help from its comforting passages, or do you read it in order that you may obey it, make it the Man of your Counsel?

Let me give you a word of personal testimony. For the first six years of my Christian life I was largely dependent upon what I called the Spirit's guidance. I knew very little of the guidance of the Word. When perplexed, I would say, "I

will ask the Lord what His will is,” and as I felt impressed I would act. But I found as I read my Bible that I was often going contrary to the written Word. I shall never forget the night I knelt before God, and opened my Bible to a passage of Scripture on the subject of baptism, which I had been avoiding for years. I would say, “I am going to ask the Lord about it,” and then I thought I had an inward feeling that baptism of the Holy Spirit was all I needed, and every time I read a Scripture and saw baptism before me I dodged it. I had a lot of dodging to do, for there were a great many Scriptures that had to do with that subject, but finally before the open Word I said, “Blessed God, by Thy grace from today on I will never try to dodge one thing that is written in Thy Word for Thy people in this age. If Thou wilt make it clear to me, by Thy grace I will walk in obedience to it,” and from that time I had blessing I had never experienced before. Two weeks after that I went down to the seaside and was buried with Him in baptism, and a week later I sat at the Table of the Lord. I had said, “All you need is to feed mentally upon the body and blood of Christ, you do not need the outward symbols.” One by one many things came before me that I had tried to make myself believe were all right, but I found they were contrary to His Word. I have sought conscientiously now for many years to yield obedience when God speaks. I do not always understand why He tells me to do certain things, but it is not necessary for me to understand, the thing for me is to obey, to do what God has asked me to do, and it is as we obey the Word that we are kept clean. “Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25–26). And so, as we judge ourselves, as we obey the Word and confess our failures, we come out from under the judgment of the Lord.

“But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” When we are judged, when we become the objects of divine discipline, when God has to deal with us because we will not judge ourselves, it is in order that we may not be condemned with the world. The unsaved man is going to be dealt with in the day of judgment, the child of God is judged by the Father in this life. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6). Every bit of pleasure and enjoyment that the worldling is going to know he has in this life. Sometimes people say, “I do not understand it, I am a Christian, and yet it seems to me I have nothing but trouble. I look at the people of the world and they seem to take things so easily.” You do not need to be surprised at that, the worldling gets all his heaven right here.

The Christian gets all the sorrow, all the trouble, all the tears he will ever have right here. When he is chastened of the Lord, and comes under the rod and is

beaten for his naughtiness, when God has to deal with him here, that is in order that he “should not be condemned with the world.” And when he gets to heaven there will be no more punishment. Yonder, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”; and they will be “forever with the Lord.” But until we get home, let us remember we are here to glorify our Lord. That is the only thing worth living for, there is nothing else that matters, just to live for Jesus, to glorify Him. We have only a little while to do it and I do not want any thought of ease or pleasure or having a good time in this world to keep me from being one whom God can use until called to Himself.

The apostle closes this portion by saying, “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.” That is very sweet, for the Lord’s Supper is a matter of fellowship, that is why we observe it together, that is why we read, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). And so we tarry and together show the Lord’s death until He comes. This is not something to gratify appetite. “If any man hunger, let him eat at home.” Just a morsel of bread, just a sip of wine will do. It is only a reminder. We are to come together, not to condemnation but in a serious manner, so truly occupied with Christ that we will have the Lord’s approval.

We come now to the last words of the chapter. I like to think of them as not merely the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians but as the words of our blessed Master to the whole church. “And the rest will I set in order when I come.” There is so much that we can never regulate, so much that will never be right down here, so many things that are out of gear in our individual lives, in our families, and in the church of God. We may try to set them in order, but we readily blunder. He says, “Walk in obedience to My Word, and the rest will I set in order when I come. I will be back soon, and what a day it will be!”

I have searched this old Book for a great many years and have never found in it one Scripture that would intimate that I must put one moment between this present hour and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He may come today, but I rejoice to know that all who have put their trust in Him are ready to meet Him when He returns.

LECTURE 26

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS

1 Corinthians 12:1–11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (vv. 1–11)

With this chapter we come to the beginning of a new division of the epistle. From verse 1 of chapter 12 to the end of chapter 14 the subject is the gifts of the Spirit, and the exercise of those gifts in the church, or the assembly of God. When the apostle gives instruction as to behavior in the church he means behavior in the assembly, and that takes in all who are redeemed, grouped into local assemblies.

In the churches of God there are spiritual gifts given for the blessing of all. In the epistle to the Ephesians we read, "When He ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:8). The Lord desires that His gospel should be preached, that His Word should be expounded, that His people should be built up in their most holy faith, and to this end He has imparted certain spiritual gifts. He has not given the same gifts to everybody, but to all He has given some gift for the blessing of the whole company.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." You will notice that the word *gifts* is in italics, and yet it appears farther down in verse 4, so we are perhaps justified in using that word. If it were proper to speak of "spirituals" in English, that would seem to be what he wrote in the Greek. The meaning is, concerning spiritual manifestations; there are different ways in which the Spirit of God is manifested, and we should not be ignorant of these. They are called "gifts" because they are given freely by the ascended Christ for the edification of the church and to assist in the proclamation of the gospel.

These Corinthians in their unconverted days knew nothing of this gospel. "Ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." "Carried away" suggests satanic power, and there is satanic power behind all idolatry. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to [demons], and not to God" (10:20). There is a terrible demon power working in every idolatrous system, and nothing can deliver from this power but the gospel of the grace of God. Our mission is to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." We do not go necessarily to antagonize people, we do not go to find fault with their religion, but we do go to preach Christ and Him crucified, and as the gospel is preached it delivers people from the satanic power that is working in these false religious systems. There is something that absolutely distinguishes them all from Christianity. They have no place for Jesus Christ, they all unite in calling Him, "Anathema," accursed.

"Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Thus the apostle marks the clear-cut dividing line between Christianity and every system of man's devices. Christianity exalts Jesus Christ

as Lord, these other systems deny His Lordship and rather think of Him as accursed. Even such a system as Islam recognizes Jesus Christ to a certain extent as a prophet of God, but sees Him as the accursed one, and so with every pagan system and so also with Judaism: it has counted Jesus Christ as an accursed one. Therefore the necessity of deliverance from those systems if people would know the truth. "No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." It is by the Holy Spirit that we recognize His Lordship. I wonder whether you have ever taken the trouble to go through this epistle to the Corinthians and count the number of times the apostle uses the title of "Lord" as applied to our blessed Savior. This is the epistle of the Lordship of Christ, and we are called upon to ever recognize His Lordship, that is, His absolute authority over our hearts and lives. When He speaks, we have only to obey. It is not ours to question, it is not ours to reason, it is not ours to ask why, it is ours to do what we are commanded to do, for we are His servants and He is our Lord.

We here read of the entire Trinity in connection with the giving and using of gifts. In verse 4 we have the Holy Spirit, in verse 5, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in verse 6, God the Father. We read in verse 4, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." The one Holy Spirit manifests Himself through the church of God in different ways. We do not all have the same gift, we are not all constituted alike even from the human and intellectual standpoint, and when it comes to spiritual things we do not have the same ministry committed to us. A great many people in our day would be saved from the wildest fanaticism if they realized this. Efforts are made to recognize someone or more of these gifts, and everyone is urged to seek them, and told that if one does not possess them, he does not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him at all. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." We shall see presently what they are, but the one Spirit operates in each case.

Second, "and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." The gift and the manifestation are all of the Spirit of God within the believer, and when it comes to using those gifts all must be in subjection to the Lordship of Christ. If, for instance, God has given me some particular gift, I am not to use that gift whenever and as I think fit, but only in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. At a funeral service some time ago I was put in a rather peculiar position. I was called upon to officiate at the burial of the mother of one of our State Senators in California. The mother had been a very devoted Christian woman, but I did not know whether her son was a Christian or not. There were present a great many of his friends, perhaps seventy-five or more men from the

legislature, and naturally I was anxious to use that opportunity to the best of my ability in subjection to God, not only to seek to comfort those who were bereaved, but to present clearly and definitely that precious gospel message which had been the joy of that mother's heart who had gone home to be with the Lord, for I was not sure that these politicians had heard the gospel for a long time. I was told that this dear lady who had passed away had a number of friends given to the use of a peculiar gift which was designated as "speaking in tongues," though certainly not that which the Bible speaks of as the gift of tongues. They had a habit of going off into a semi-trance condition and uttering weird sounds. Somebody said, "Now just as you stand up to preach, these women will immediately begin with this weird gift of theirs." So I said to the undertaker, "There are four people back there by the door. I wish you would keep an eye on them. If you see their jaws begin to work in a peculiar way (I had heard that for a few minutes before they began to make this noise, their jaws would work very peculiarly), you might suggest that they go outside and not remain for the funeral service." So I began to speak and, sure enough, in a minute or two I saw the jaws begin to work, but the undertaker was on the job and immediately suggested to them that they all leave. In a moment they straightened up, but said with indignation, "This is a gift of God and we are free to use it where we will." But the undertaker said, "Not here in my undertaking parlor," and so they were quiet. One might have the most marked gift of God, but that does not mean that he is at liberty to use it wherever he will. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32), and if any are gifted by God, they are to hold that gift in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ and not make spiritual nuisances of themselves. Our blessed Lord's authority must be recognized in the use of gifts.

Then we read, "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." There are different ways by which the Word of God is given out, but it is the same God, and here of course it is God the Father "which worketh all in all." He may have given to some of you very modest gifts. Your voice may never be heard in public, but you are to use your gift in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ, if only in the quiet place of your home, just as truly as though you were called to preach or to teach in the assembly.

"The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." That is, it is not given for show, it is not given in order that a man may attract attention to himself, but for the edification of others. This in itself is very important. If God gives me any little gift at all, He gives it not that I may gather people about myself, but He gives it to me for the blessing of others, for the salvation of sinners and for the edification of saints. In John the Baptist we have a lovely

picture of what every gifted servant of Christ really ought to be. John says, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord" (John 1:23). And pointing to the Savior, he says, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). John found his delight in lifting up Christ, not in directing people's attention to himself. All gifts are given that Christ may be exalted, and in that way others find blessing.

In verse 8 we have these gifts definitely specified. We may not see them all in evidence today, probably there are some of them that we never see. That does not say that they are not in the church. Some insist that some of these gifts have absolutely disappeared, but I do not know of any Scripture that tells us that. I do not know of any Scripture that says that the age of miracles has passed, and I would not dare to say that the sign gifts all ended with Paul's imprisonment. I know from early church history that this is not true. As the early servants of God followed up the work of the apostles, gifts of healing and other signs were frequently manifested, and if the gift of tongues had fallen into disuse, marvelous help was given to the servants of God to preach in languages of the people that they had never known before. So I do not think it correct to take the ground that these gifts have necessarily disappeared from the church. I do, however, believe that many of them are not often seen today, and I think there is good reason for that.

In the beginning the apostle writes to these very Corinthians, "I have espoused you . . . as a chaste virgin to Christ." It was a separated company, the affianced bride of the Lamb, and as this church went forth it was the delight of the blessed risen Lord to lavish upon her gift after gift. These Corinthians came "behind in no gift," we are told, but it seems to me we can see in the book of Acts that as time went on and the church began to drift a little, and as dissension and other things came in that grieved the Lord, there was more reserve on His part in bestowing gifts. That, I believe, explains the lack of many of these gifts today. The church has gotten so far away and there is so much strife, division, worldliness, and carnality that He no longer delights to lavish His gifts upon her as He did in the beginning.

Let me illustrate it this way. Here is a young man who is engaged to be married to a beautiful young woman. They have plighted their troth each to the other, and he seals that engagement by giving her a beautiful diamond ring. But now suppose that he has to be away from her for some time before the marriage; we will say he is going over to Manila or to Shanghai to earn enough money to build a home for his bride and send for her. Every little while what a joy it is to him to pick out some beautiful thing, and send this gift back to her, and she in turn is proud and happy to know that she is constantly remembered by him. But

suppose that absence instead of making the heart grow fonder on her part should make her careless. She thinks, "Well, he is away from me so long, and he cannot expect me to forego the pleasures of the other young folk," and so she allows other young men to take her out and to pay a great deal of attention to her. By-and-by word comes to him, perhaps from his mother or his sister, "Your fiancée is playing you false; she is not as true to you as she promised to be, you had better come home if you want to win her heart again." Perhaps he cannot get home, and writes a letter to her which provokes a rather indignant answer on her part. He no longer finds the same delight in sending gifts to her as before, when he believed her to be true to him. He loved to bestow his gifts upon her once, but now he becomes more reticent in his own expressions of love and is more careful in what he spends on her. This illustration may be a very inadequate one, but it expresses one reason why our blessed Lord does not now give to His church all the sign gifts that He did when she was walking with Him in holiness and separation from this godless world. Another is that since we have a whole Bible, the New Testament as well as the Old, the sign gifts are not needed as at the beginning.

What are those gifts? Let us look at them. "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit." Here are two gifts intimately linked together. What is the difference between them? Let me speak of knowledge first. The blessed Lord gives to some the knowledge of His Word, insight into the Holy Scriptures, in a remarkable way. I have known men who filled me with holy envy, for they seemed to know this Book from Genesis to Revelation. They could turn unerringly to almost any portion, and I have prayed, "O Lord, make Thy Word to me what it is to them; give me the gift of knowledge; open Thy Word to me." You do not get this in some sudden miraculous way, but if you wish it, there is a way by which you can seek for it that is in perfect accordance with the Word of God. In Proverbs 2:1-5 we read, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God." The gift of knowledge is given to those who earnestly study the Word of God in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. But one might have the gift of knowledge and yet fail greatly because of the lack of ability to use that knowledge aright, and so we have here the gift of wisdom. This is the ability to use what God has revealed to us in a way that helps and blesses others. How many a

one knows a little of the Word of God, but uses it in such a way that he drives people from him. Everything he says may be scriptural, but you can say scriptural things in such an unwise way that you upset people instead of helping them. Of course, I know there are some people who are upset, no matter what you do.

Someone came to a preacher and said, "I don't like to hear you preach, because you always rub the fur the wrong way." He answered, "Not at all, sister; just turn around." Very often, no matter how carefully you use the Word of God, you seem to rub people the wrong way, but that is because they are going the wrong way. The gift of wisdom is the ability to use the Word of God wisely, so that you will edify people and build them up instead of driving them from you.

In the next verse we read, "To another faith by the same Spirit." This, of course, is not the faith by which we are saved, otherwise many might say, "I would like to believe in the Lord Jesus, but I have not the gift of faith and so cannot believe." So far as you are concerned, my unsaved friend, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), and if you open your heart when the Word of God is preached, He will give you faith. When we read, "all men have not faith," it is because some men turn from the Word of God, but here God gives to His own people the gift of faith and this refers to special faith for a special service.

George Müller, in that great work of the Bristol Orphan Houses, was, I believe, the outstanding man of faith in the nineteenth century. God called him to open the orphanage to care for homeless boys and girls, but he had no money, and so he said to the Lord, "Thou wilt have to supply the means." And so in the name of the Lord he went forward and spent every cent he had in opening the first building. The Lord sent more money, the children came, and the work went on. In fifty years he received \$6,500,000 for that work, and he never asked people for it, he did not beg for money, the Lord sent it in. I have met a number of people who told me that they were going to do the same kind of a work as George Müller. They started a home, announced that it was a faith work, but there is only one instance that I know of where the whole thing has not ended in failure. Why? Because they were trying to do George Müller's work without George Müller's gift of faith. When God calls a person to do a certain work, He gives him the gift of faith. The same thing is true in connection with missionary work. When God raised up Hudson Taylor to start the China Inland Mission, he knew that he was not to ask for money, but to trust the Lord. Every little while I have known someone else to say, "I am going to start a mission and run it on faith like Hudson Taylor." They have gone on for a while, and then we have read of starving missionaries, and the whole thing has gone to pieces. They tried

to do Hudson Taylor's work without Hudson Taylor's faith. This faith is a special gift for a special work.

Then we read, "To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit." The gift of healing is the ability to lay one's hands upon the sick in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and call them back to life and to health. I do not know whether any today have that gift. I have never seen it exercised. I have gone in with other brethren and prayed for the sick, and we have seen the Lord graciously raise them up, but I have never felt that any of us had the gift of healing. I have heard of this sort of thing, but I must have been unfortunate in my investigations, for whenever I made any, I found the people who were supposed to be miraculously healed were either dead or worse than ever. I thought at one time that one dear man of God had this gift, but I was with him one day when he was praying for a sick woman and she did not get healed, and he turned on her and scolded her soundly because she did not have more faith, and told her she must have some hidden sin in her life. If that brother had had the gift of healing, her faith would not have made any difference. If there are such people in the world today—and there may be—we can thank God for them. Personally, I have never known one.

"To another the working of miracles." God gives to certain servants the ability to work miracles. A miracle is anything that is not accounted for by mere natural law. God has often wrought wonderful things not to be accounted for naturally. When in Africa there was a terrible drought, and the natives had cried and cried to their false gods, but no relief had come, a missionary felt called upon to bring them all together and said, "Now I am going to cry to the God of heaven to give rain." He stood before them and offered a prayer, and as he began to pray there was a cloudless sky above him, but he had not finished praying before there was a terrific clap of thunder. The thunder and lightning continued and in half-an-hour the rain was pouring down. That was a miracle.

"To another prophecy." In the New Testament sense prophecy is not the foretelling of future events. Prophecy is preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit of God that meets the actual need of the case.

"To another discerning of spirits." That is the ability to see through people. That is a gift I fear I do not have. I am too apt to believe every story that anybody tells me, at least until I have proven it to be false.

"To another divers kinds of tongues." The gift of tongues was the ability to preach the gospel in languages that people had never learned. The preacher, in the power of the Spirit, was able to stand up and preach in the language of the people without having a course of schooling to learn the language. I do not know of this gift in the world today.

“To another the interpretation of tongues.” That is the ability to interpret a language that one has never learned. God gave those gifts in the beginning.

Then we read in verse 11, “All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” If it is His will for us to have any of these gifts, He will give them to us; otherwise, He will not. Therefore, the folly of any one insisting upon having one or more of these gifts as the definite manifestation of the indwelling of the Spirit of God. In Ephesians we read of certain gifts that will abide to the end, that is, teaching and preaching for the edification of the saints.

BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY

1 Corinthians 12:12–26

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more

abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. (vv. 12–26)

Seven things are brought before us in the section, but that which is first emphasized is the unity of the body of Christ. In verse 12 we have the unity of the human body as a figure of that of the church. “For as the body is one”—that is, your body and my body. We have a great many different members, each one having special functions, and yet the body is one; it is under one central control, one heart, one circulatory system, one mind dominating and controlling everything. “As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is *[the]* Christ.” The definite article is found in the original, although we do not see it on the page of our King James Version. When the apostle uses the term, “the Christ,” it is just the same as if he said, “the church,” for as the context shows, he is thinking of the entire church as linked with the Lord Jesus Christ, its Head in heaven. As the human body is one, so also is the Christ. “Christ” means “the Anointed,” and our Lord Jesus is the Anointed. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, that is why He is called Christ. But we read of all believers, “He which . . . hath anointed us, is God” (2 Cor. 1:21) so we too have been anointed—“Christed”—by the same Spirit with whom God anointed Jesus. Therefore, our risen Head in heaven and the members of the body everywhere on earth constitute the Christ, the anointed One.

We cannot break the link that joins the believer to his Head in heaven. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” Notice, it is not by the possession of divine life that we become members of the body of Christ. All believers from Abel (and we can go back to Adam, for Adam believed God when the promise came that the Seed of the woman should bruise the seed of Satan, and God declared His satisfaction in that faith by clothing Adam and his wife with coats of skin) down to the end of time have life from Christ. There is no other source of life, and no natural man in any dispensation was ever a child of God. The only way a man can become a child of God is through a second birth, through the reception of divine life, and this is given through believing the gospel. I know that people sometimes say, “But we must have life first before believing the gospel.” We have life before we believe a great many particulars in the

gospel, but the apostle Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. . . . And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:23, 25). Therefore, by believing the gospel, whatever form it takes in the various dispensations (for God's message to man has differed in the various ages, but it has always had to do with Christ), men are born again.

However, to be born again is not the same thing as being baptized into the body of Christ. No one is baptized into the body of Christ until the Spirit of God dwells in him, and the Spirit comes to dwell only in people who have been born again. There is as much difference between being born by the Spirit and being indwelt by the Spirit as between building a house and moving into it. New birth is by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit builds the house, and then He comes to indwell the believer, He comes to take possession. In our dispensation there is no appreciable difference in time between a man's being born again and being baptized into the body of Christ, but there was a time when there were numbers of people who were born again by the Spirit, but were not indwelt by Him.

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers and to baptize them into one body. The Spirit of God now dwells within us and makes all believers one. That is what is meant by, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." I like the good old translation of the word *baptized*, to which some people object. I take this Greek word to mean "immerse." "For by one Spirit are we all [*immersed*] into one body." We who were so many individuals before have now been immersed into one, and in this body there is neither Jew nor Greek. Some used to be Jews, some used to be Gentiles, before they were born of God and indwelt by His Spirit. Now they have lost their old standing in the flesh. When we meet our Hebrew Christian brethren, we do not think of them as Jews any more, we think of them as fellow members of the body of Christ, and when they look upon us, their Gentile brethren, they do not think of us as unclean Gentiles, but as fellow members of Christ's body. That is what took place on the Day of Pentecost, and has been going on ever since.

In this body there are neither bond nor free. It is not a question of master or servant. In the world outside we meet one another on that basis. If I am employed by another I am to render proper service to my master, but when we come into the church of God, we come together as fellow members of Christ's body.

A Christian worker once told of her visit to the beautiful palace of an English Duchess, a very humble Christian. On the Lord's Day morning the Duchess took the visitor to a meeting of a little group of Christian people gathered together

around the table of the Lord, and as they sat there, a man got up and expounded the Word to them. The Duchess whispered to the lady, "That is my coachman." The Christian worker was a little surprised that this lady should go and listen to her coachman expound the Word, and said to her later, "Isn't it hard on your pride to have to listen to your coachman open the Scriptures to you?" The Duchess replied, "In the church of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, we are all one in Christ Jesus." All these earthly distinctions are wiped out in the presence of God.

So the apostle adds, "We . . . have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Just as by water baptism a line of demarcation has been drawn between the Christian and the world, so in this way we are definitely linked with the one body and enjoy fellowship in Him. Everything that you enjoy of a spiritual character in fellowship with your brethren, you do as in fellowship with the Holy Spirit who now indwells you.

Then we have a passage that is really a warning against discontent as to position in the body of Christ. In verses 14–17 we read, "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" As men and women not yet glorified we still possess that old carnal nature. Even though set apart to God in Christ with new natures, we so often still find working within us envy and jealousy, and there is the tendency to say, "Well, as I cannot do what so and so does, I will not do anything," and so discontent is engendered. Remember that every member of your physical body has its own special function. Just imagine a foot going on strike, and some morning when you are getting out of bed and you go to put your foot on the floor it should say, "I do not like being a foot, I do not like always being shut up, having a stocking pulled over me and then a shoe, I have just as much right to be in the open as that hand. I do not like it that the hand does all the writing, the painting, and the playing of the piano while I have to be hidden away all the time. I do not like that kind of a thing, and I am not going to function unless you train me to write and to play the piano. I refuse to work any longer as a foot." I have seen folks just like that, folks that won't play unless they can do things that other people do. I heard of a man born without arms who had been so wonderfully trained that he could hold a pen between his toes and write and paint on a board, but he was a freak in a sideshow. A normal person does not do that. The foot cannot do the work of a hand. If the foot is content to do its

own work, what a splendid thing it is, but if it tries to do the work of a hand, what a failure it is.

If every member of the body does its own work and does it well, the whole body is benefited thereby. Just so in the church or assembly of God. He does not gift every one in the same way; some have special public ministry, others have quiet, private service for the Lord, but all are important. I think I shall never have the least inkling until I get to heaven and stand at the judgment seat of Christ how much I have owed to quiet saints shut away in hidden places who have bowed down on their knees before God and asked His blessing upon my ministry during these forty-three years that I have been preaching the gospel. I have had the public place, but I am sure that the greatest amount of the credit for work done goes to those hidden saints who have thought enough about me to bear me up in prayer, that God might keep me from sin and use my testimony for the glory of His name. So let us be content to labor on in the place God has given us.

"If the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" Fancy the ear going on strike and saying, "I refuse to hear; if I cannot be the eye, I am not going to do anything." What a foolish thing! And yet there are people like that. The apostle says, and I imagine he smiled as he said it, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?" Just imagine a body a great big walking eye. Or, "If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" If the body were one immense ear, would it not be a peculiar thing? And so each member has its place, and each is to act for God in that place.

In verse 18 the apostle shows that there should be no discontent, that there is no place for natural ambitions. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." When I think, "I should like to do so much that I cannot," is it not blessed to realize that He has set me right here where I am, that I am in the place where He has put me, and He will give me grace to live for Him here?

"But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." What a rebuke to that sense of disdain that some of us cherish at times for other members of the body of Christ. Our Christian fellowship would be ten thousand times more precious if every one of us would settle it with God that by His grace we would never let an unkind criticism go out of our lips against any of His people. I find that the people who are the most sensitive to criticism are the most ready to criticize, those who get all broken up and upset if someone makes the least derogatory remark about them are those who will speak in the most cruel, unkind, and critical way of others.

I speak to you as a preacher, and I fear we are more guilty of this than anybody else. We often think and speak of one another in the most unkind way. Is it not a shame that men who have been set apart by God for the proclamation of His truth, who ought to stand shoulder to shoulder and be very jealous of each other's reputation, should try to climb up on the failures of others? We who try to minister the Word, shall we not set an example to our brethren by covenanting with God that we will always say the thing that is good, the thing that is kind and helpful of our fellow servants; and if we see faults in them shall we not go to them personally and seek to help them; and when we speak to others of them, tell about the good things? In a restaurant I once saw a sign which read, "If you like our food, tell others; if you don't, tell us." I think that would be a good sign for a church of God. If you do not like things, you come and tell us about it, and let us seek to put things right. We need one another and we ought to be helpers of one another. The tongues of some of us are so vitriolic, we can say such unkind things, and forget that these people are souls whom Jesus loved enough to die for, so dear to God that He gave His Son for their redemption.

Oh, that when Christians meet and part,
 These words were graved on every heart—
 They're dear to God!
 However willful and unwise,
 We'll look on them with loving eyes—
 They're dear to God!
 Oh, wonder!—to the Eternal One,
 Dear as His own beloved Son;
 Dearer to Jesus than His blood,
 Dear as the Spirit's fixed abode—
 They're dear to God!

When tempted to give pain for pain,
 How would this thought our words restrain,
 They're dear to God!
 When truth compels us to contend,
 What love with all our strife should blend!
 They're dear to God!
 When they would shun the pilgrim's lot
 For this vain world, forget them not;
 But win them back with love and prayer,

They never can be happy there,
If dear to God.

Shall we be there so near, so dear,
And be estranged and cold whilst here—
All dear to God?

By the same cares and toils opprest,
We lean upon one faithful Breast,
We hasten to the same repose;
How bear or do enough for those
So dear to God!

Let us remember that "God [hath] set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

"Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." Sometimes perhaps we discount someone's gift because it does not appeal to us, and yet that very person may be God's messenger to others. Years ago when I was in the Salvation Army we had a girl who was certainly imbued by the Spirit of God, but she had worked in the open air so much that her throat was spoiled. I remember listening to her once as she tried to sing a song, but she could not sing. I felt so sorry for her, and somebody standing next to me said, "Why does she make such a fool of herself by trying to sing?" And on the other side someone said to me, "Oh, it does me so much good every time I hear that girl sing; it comes from her heart and she is doing it for love for Christ." Remember, the people whom you do not appreciate may be God's messengers to other folk. Be careful that you do not do anything to spoil the effect of their testimony.

I went to the dinner table in a home, and the people said, "We wish you would pray for our sons and daughter. We have tried to bring them to Christ. We do get them to come to meeting with us, but they are getting less and less interested." I said, "I am sorry; we must pray for them." There had just been a change of pastors in that church, and I had come to help the new pastor in some meetings, and as the dinner was passed around I said, "This new pastor of yours seems a fine godly man." The mother said, "I haven't any use for him; he doesn't know how to dress for one thing, and he murders the king's English." The father said, "Yes, we are most disappointed in him." And then the two boys and the girl went for them and said, "We would like to know why you expect us to go to church." After the meal I said to the father, "How do you expect your boys and your girl to be interested in spiritual things when you tear the messenger of Christ to pieces over the dinner

table?" Let us be careful, let us value one another, and remember that we each have our place to fill, and let us seek to fill it to the glory of God.

"And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness." You heard that man testify in the mission, and his grammar was so bad you said, "Oh, I wish he would sit down," but yonder a poor wretch listened and said, "What! Did God save a man like that? Maybe He can save me. I am about as bad as he was when God saved him." He was not a very handsome nor a very brilliant member of the body, but *you* never could have reached that poor down-and-out man as he did.

"And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness." The apostle Paul was a very observing person. Here is a woman who has a rather badly-formed ear. Upon that member she bestows more honor. Her beautiful hair is drawn over the ear, and that very uncomely part has become the most beautiful thing about her. People try to cover up the things in themselves that they do not think are pleasing, and try to make them more beautiful. I wish we would learn to cover up the uncomely things in our brethren. You never saw a perfectly beautiful woman yet who tried to cover her face with a dark heavy veil, unless she was about some nefarious business.

"For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked." He has done this in order that there should be no divisions in the body, no strife, "that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." Now honestly, if you had loved that brother or that sister as much as you love yourself, would you have said that thing the other day? Remember, "The members should have the same care one for another."

A brother came to the late Leon Tucker and started telling him quite a little about another preacher. Mr. Tucker asked, "Is it because you love this brother so much you are telling me this?" He turned very red and did not know how to answer him. Test yourself by that. "The members should have the same care one for another."

And then it is a practical thing, "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." We know how it is in the human body. When you have had a festered finger, did you ever say to yourself, "That affects only my thumb or finger, and I am not going to let the rest of the body bother about it." But the whole body was affected because of it. Let me say something serious and solemn: Your entire local assembly is affected if there is one member that is not living for

God in it. The whole body of Christ is affected if there is one member playing fast and loose with holiness and purity and righteousness, because we are so intimately linked together.

“Or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” One member is selected for some position of honor, and all the members are jealous of that one. Is that it? No, if “one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” If a member suffer, I suffer with him; if a member be honored, I rejoice with him.

LECTURE 28

CHRIST'S PROVISION FOR HIS CHURCH

1 Corinthians 12:27–13:1

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (12:27–13:1)

In this particular portion we have Christ's gracious provision for the edification of His church in this scene. In summing up, the apostle says, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." That is, you Christians are the body of Christ.

Recently I read a book on a political theme in which the writer said, "It is important for us to remember, as Scripture says, we are all members of one body

and therefore should work for the good of every nation." Scripture is not talking about nations when it speaks about members of the body of Christ, nor does it use the word "body" as we use that term. We speak of a body of troops, a body of soldiers, etc., and mean a company, a collective company, but that is not what is meant by the term *body* when it is used in the New Testament for the church of the living God, the body of Christ. The illustration, as we have seen, is taken from the human body. As the human body is one but has many members, so also is the Christ, and every member joined together and linked with the Head is to work for the good of the whole. And so it is Christians that the apostle has in view when he says, "Ye are the body of Christ," and then he adds, "and members in particular." Looked at in one sense we have lost our former identity, we are not just so many units as once we were, having no special relationship each to the other, for we are now united to one another. We who are saved, we who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are thus baptized into one and are members of the body. But on the other hand we have our individual responsibility as members. Just as the various members of my body have their part in the building up of the whole, so every Christian has his special responsibility for the blessing of the entire body of Christ.

God has given to the church special gifts which are for the edification of the rest, and in this we may see Christ's gracious provision for His church. In Ephesians 4:8 we read, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," and we are told what some of these gifts are: "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (v. 11). Then we are told why He gave them (v. 12). If we should read it exactly as in our King James Version, we would think it was for three purposes. Let me read it emphasizing the punctuation, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the [edification] of the body of Christ." From this you would gather that Christ had given these gifts, evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc., for three things: to perfect the saints, to do the work of the ministry, to edify the body of Christ. But let me point out that these punctuation marks are put in by our English editors, and have no real place in the Greek text. Now let us read it omitting the punctuation marks. "He gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ." He did not give these special gifts to certain ones to do everything for the rest that they might sit back and be perfected and helped and blessed through them, but that they through the ministry of the Word might perfect the saints, in order that the saints might go out and do the work of the ministry and thus edify the

body of Christ. It never was the mind of the Spirit of God to have any drones in the gospel hive.

Now notice, the gifts that men most highly esteem are apparently the least valuable. For instance, we hear a great deal today and have heard for the last twenty or twenty-five years, about the gift of tongues, and some people imagine that this is the most important gift of all. Often people say to me, "Brother, have you the Holy Spirit?"

I say, "Yes, I have. I believe the gospel, and that tells me that upon believing I was 'sealed with [the] holy Spirit of promise'" (Eph. 1:13).

"Well, then," they say, "can you speak in tongues?"

"Well, I speak a little English, and very, very little Chinese, but I had to study very hard to get those."

"But that is not it," they say; "can you speak in tongues in the power of the Spirit?" and they mean some strange language that I have never learned, and they tell me that is the supreme evidence of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Instead of that being the greatest of all the gifts, it is apparently the least, for notice the order in which these are given, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles." And where do we have their ministry today? Right here in the blessed Word of God. Their voices have long since been silenced, but the witness still goes on and through their written ministry they abide in the church until the end of time. Linked with them we have the prophets, and they too have long since been silenced in the primary sense. Luke and Mark were prophets, and they gave us their written ministry and went home to heaven. And so we are told that the church of the living God is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Then notice in the third place, "teachers." The teacher then is one of the special gifts that God has given to the church, and—may I say?—if I had my choice of all the gifts there are two that I would find very difficult to choose between. If the Lord were to say to me, as He did to Solomon, "Ask what I shall give thee"; if He should say, "I am going to give you any gift that you want to be used for the blessing of a needy world and for My people." I would have difficulty in choosing between the gift of an evangelist and that of a teacher of the Word. My heart yearns to be able to preach the gospel in a way that will grip dying men and women and bring them face to face with the realities of eternity. The gift of an evangelist is one of the greatest of all, but on the other hand when I see how the people of God today are bewildered and misled, are carried about by every wind of doctrine, I realize how much they need careful, thoughtful biblical instruction, and my heart cries out, "O God, help me to feed Thy people;

give me the gift of teaching in order that I may open up Thy Word to Thy people." For after all, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). And so I crave the gift of the teacher. The teacher is the one who comes to men giving them, not his own thoughts, not making up beautiful essays which he calls sermons, but he opens up, expounds, the Word of God. Our Lord Jesus, I think, describes the teacher in a wonderful way when He says, "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. 13:52). The treasure house is the Word of God.

I listened to a widely-advertised man the other day who was said to be one of the outstanding religious leaders of our day, and for nearly an hour he was telling ministers how to preach. I listened carefully, but I did not hear him quote one verse of Scripture. He quoted from Shakespeare, from George Bernard Shaw, and a number of trashy novels, and he drew his illustrations from ancient and modern literature. Yet he was supposed to be a teacher of preachers. If preachers have to listen to that kind of a teacher it is no wonder they deliver sermons that never could convert one poor sinner.

Scripture says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. 119:130), and the apostle writing to Timothy says, "Preach the word. . . . For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:2-3). The teacher is the man who calls the people of God back to the Book and opens up the Word of God to them. One of our very well-known American pulpit orators stated some time ago that expository preaching is the poorest type of preaching in the world because it leaves so little scope for the imagination. Thank God for any kind of preaching that leaves little scope for man's imagination, for the Word of God says, "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). It ought to be the earnest desire of the real minister of Christ to subject himself to the Word in order that all unholy imaginations might be cast down, and only the solemn serious truth of God brought to bear upon the minds of people. God give us teachers of the Bible!

Then we read, "After that, miracles." Some people may have thought it was, "First of all, miracles." I am not a miracle worker and do not pretend to be. I have gone in and prayed with a great many sick people and some of them have been healed very quickly, but I did not have the gift of healing. To go in and pray

for people is one thing; to have the gift of healing is another. If a lame man were here and I could turn to him and say, "In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk," and in a moment he would spring to his feet and become whole, that would be the gift of healing, that would be working a miracle. I have seen some people throw away crutches, but I have heard that they came back for them a week or two later. And so I say of the next gift, the gift of healing, what I say of miracles. The Lord may give these gifts, and if He does, we will thank Him for them, but we do not know of any at the present time.

But in the next one, "helps," is something we can all understand. Here are two terms, "helps, governments," linked together. In these we have pretty much what we find elsewhere in Scripture where we read of the officers of the church, its deacons and elders. A true deacon is a help; he is one who can help in all the temporal and business affairs of the church, and a true elder is one who has spiritual discernment and can govern in the church of God. What a wonderful thing it is when men are really thus gifted of the Lord as "helps" and "governments!" What a pitiful thing it is when a church is bereft of these kinds of gifts! There are too many deacons who are deacons in name only. The word *deacon* means "servant," a ministering servant. There are too many elders who are elders in name only, who are not really guides and helps to the church of God, but it is a blessed thing when God gives to a church true "helps" and "governments."

Last of all in this list we have "diversities of tongues," as though it is the gift least of all to be accounted of. And why is that? Because anybody can with a little intelligence learn a new tongue, and in most instances it is better that he should do that than to receive it miraculously. One may say in regard to this the same about receiving the truth of God. God could give every one a sudden illumination that we might have an amazing insight into His truth, but He does not choose to give it in that way. He says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God." There are too many Christians today who would like to have everything predigested. This is the day of this kind of thing, and many Christians would like to have the truth presented in a pre-digested way so that it would not require any trouble to get it into their inmost systems. But God wants us to study His Word, and does not give us His truth in that easy way.

"Are all apostles?" Admittedly, no. We do not know of any such today in the full sense. "Are all prophets?" Again we have to answer, "No." There may be prophets today, but they are very few, and as far as I know there are none in the full sense. "Are all teachers?" Again we have to answer, "No," and yet there are teachers that God has thus gifted. If you as a minister are troubled with the question of empty pews, begin to dig into the Book and teach the Word, and

you will soon draw the people. I know two young ladies who after they were graduated from college, did not know what to do in order to support themselves. So they came to my old home city, Oakland, California, and in a little side street opened up a wee restaurant. It was so small that only about seven people could sit down at one time. I went over to sample their cooking, and I found that the coffee was very different from what I was used to in most lunch-rooms and so I went back to my bookroom and said to the other workers, "If you want a good cup of coffee, go to such and such a place." The next day people were standing on the outside walk waiting for the seven inside to finish their lunch. Soon the girls had to rent the place next to them. When I was in Oakland the last time, they had a great big restaurant serving hundreds of people. The word had gone out over the city, "You can always get a good cup of coffee and excellent things to eat there." Let the word go out, "You can always get the Word of God in that church, for that minister gives you the truth of God to refresh your soul," and you won't have any problem about empty pews. I heard a minister say to a group of pastors, "There is one thing that is a great help; you can do a great deal with different colored lights. You can get up wonderful effects with colored lights, and people will come from far and wide to see. Then, you can do so much with rhythmic dancing." And then he added, "One of the finest things I have found is moving pictures for the night service."

The church of God does not exist for the amusement of people. What we need is the Word of God presented in simplicity and power. Get your own mind filled with the truth of God and then give it to others. This minister said to the pastors, "You know, some of you may not approve of these modern methods, but I say you have to take your choice between empty pews or up-to-date methods." Oh, no, we do not have to make any such choice; if you just give people the Book in the power of the Spirit they will come, for they are really ready to listen to the Word of God.

"Are all workers of miracles?" We know of very few indeed, if any. "Have all the gifts of healing?" No, and whether there are any we cannot say. "Do all speak with tongues?" Not in the Bible sense. "Do all interpret?" They do not. But now the apostle says that we are not to be concerned if we do not have all these gifts, "but covet earnestly the best gifts," seek those that are for the edification of the church of God. Suppose it does not please God to give you any of these, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way."

There is something more excellent than signs and wonders. What is that? "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." This leads us right into the

wonderful “Love Chapter,” the thirteenth chapter of this epistle. The greatest gift of all is to have the Spirit of God dwelling in you shedding abroad the love of God in your heart so that you manifest the love of Christ.

There used to be a little mission in the lower part of Manhattan in New York. A poor little Irish boy started going there and got a great deal out of it. By-and-by his folks made a little more money and moved from that section and said, “Now, Patsy, you must attend one of the more stylish churches.” So they took him over and entered him in the Sunday school. The little fellow put in two Sundays there. On the third Sunday he was found way down near the Battery sitting in the little mission Sunday school, and when he got back home, the folks said, “O, Pat, why weren’t you in the nice Sunday school?” “I wanted to go back to the other Sunday school,” he said.

“But why did you want to go back to that one?” He hesitated, and they said, “Come, tell us why.”

“Well,” he said, “they love a fellow down there.” That is what took him miles and miles down to the simple little mission. It is a great testimony for any church, assembly, mission or Sunday school when people can say not alone that the Word of God is preached there, but that “they love a fellow there.”

This divine love is not something that is pumped up out of the natural heart; it is divinely given. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5), and that is why men and women need to be born again. That is why we need to have a definite dealing with God about the sin question. That is why we have to come to the place where we put our heart’s trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our own Savior. Trusting in Him we are born of God and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, and thus the love of Christ will be manifested in our ways.

THE LOVE CHAPTER

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away

childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. (vv. 1–13)

We have noticed that in the twelfth chapter of this epistle we have the gifts which the risen Christ gave to His church. In chapter 14 we have the use of the gifts; but in between the two chapters we have the spirit in which they are to be exercised. Someone has said that the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is “the divine smithy,” alluding to the furnace in the blacksmith’s shop, where the tools of chapter 12 are heated red-hot to be properly used in chapter 14. Gift without love is a poor thing. One might preach with great clarity and even eloquence, but if there is no love behind it, it would be almost wasting words. The word translated in the King James Version as “charity” is not the thought of the good works, the kindness, that we attach to the word, but the root and source of those good deeds, that which pleases God—*love*. So here the apostle emphasizes the importance of love, not only in the life of the servant of God, but in the lives of all Christians.

There are three well-known Greek words for “love”: *eros*, *phileō*, and *agapē*. *Eros* you will recognize at once as the name we are familiar with in Greek mythology, as the god of love, the son of Aphrodite. *Eros* is the word ordinarily used in classical Greek for love between the sexes, the love of sweethearts, the love of husband for wife and wife for husband. *Phileō* is a broader word, generally used for the love of friends. It speaks of a kindly friendly affection, and is also used for the love of parents to children and children to parents, and the love of citizens for the state to which they belong. Then the other word, *agapē*, is used for a higher type of love, a love that is all-absorbing, that completely dominates one’s whole being. This is the word that we have in this chapter.

It is very significant that in the writing of the New Testament the Spirit of God seemed to utterly forbid the use of the word *eros*. It is very freely used in the writings of the Greek poets and philosophers, but is never found in the New Testament. This word representing the love between the sexes had been so abused, so degraded by the Greeks that God, as it were, stood over His Book and said to those who were writing, “Do not put that word in here; it is too capable of being utterly misunderstood. I do not want that word in My Book, for so many vile things have been linked with it.” It had become so misused that it was not even right to think of it as expressing the true love of a chaste wife and a good husband. So God did not allow it any place in the New Testament.

The word, *phileō*, is used in its verbal form in many places in the New Testament, but always for friendliness, kindly feeling one toward another, and brotherly love, or fraternal affection. When it comes to a question of that which is divine, the Holy Spirit has chosen most carefully, and He uses this word, *agapē*. “God is *agapē*”—“God is love”—in this highest, most utterly unselfish sense. It is used in the New Testament for God’s love to us and our love to God, and for the love we have for anything we put in place of God. When we are warned against the love of the world, this word, *agapē*, is used, for men devote themselves wholly and completely to the things of the world and to obtaining money, and so make a god of the world and of money. We can readily see how beautifully this should bring before us a love that is absolutely holy, and ought to be complete and supreme in our lives.

The love of this chapter then, this divine love, is not that which is in the heart of the natural man; it is not a love that you can pump up out of your heart if you are not a child of God, because it is not there. You may have “*phileō*.” Take that poor heathen mother; she loves her child, and she may even love her husband. That unsaved man and woman love their country, they love those that love them in this lower sense, but it is only when one has been born of God that he loves in the high sense represented in this chapter. That is why we read, “Every one that loveth is born of God.” If the word *phileō* had been used there, you might say that every mother who loves her children, every patriot who loves his country is born of God. But that is not true; this completely unselfish divine love is the portion of only those who are regenerated. This is the word that the Holy Spirit uses when we read, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). It is He, dwelling in the believer, who sheds abroad this love in our hearts.

We shall divide this chapter into three parts for our purpose. In verses 1–3 we have the unique value of love. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” Here you see, the warning is against substituting mere talent for love. A man might preach and be so talented that he could stir his audience to deepest emotion, but there might be nothing there for God, nothing that would reach the needy hearts of men. To speak with the eloquence of an angel apart from divine love will accomplish nothing.

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge.” You say, “Is it possible to have the gift of prophecy and not have love?” Oh, yes! They said of Saul, and he was not a child of God, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” When associating with prophets, he talked like a prophet;

when associating with the world, he talked like a worldling. And then you have the tragic case of Balaam to whom God actually gave the gift of foresight. He was able to look on down through the years and utter marvelous prophecies, yet his heart was exercised by covetous practices; he wanted Balak's money and therefore desired to curse Israel, but the Lord forbade him, and he said, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?" (Num. 23:8). Think of this marvelous prophecy coming from a man whose mere intelligence had been illuminated by the Spirit so that he could say, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). Since those words were spoken thirty-five hundred years have elapsed and they have proven true ever since. The people, God's earthly people, the covenant people, Israel, have lived alone, and they are not reckoned among the nations. So one may have the gift of prophecy and yet not have love. What an empty thing! Think of Balaam, able to look down through the centuries and utter those prophecies recorded in Numbers 23–24. He prayed, "Let me die the death of the righteous," but instead of that he died under the judgment of God because he was never regenerated.

"Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not [love] I am nothing." Of course he is not speaking of saving faith here, but rather the gift of faith spoken of in chapter 12. And though it were possible for God to give me faith that would scatter the hills from their places, yet without love I am nothing. How solemn the words of our Lord Jesus, "Ye must be born again," for it is absolutely impossible for any man to produce such love in himself apart from divine grace. The apostle is not speaking of mere sentiment.

A pastor was leaving his church to go to another. He was one of these modern, up-to-date preachers who could say a lot of sweet nothings that would not hurt a flea, and on the other hand would do no one any good. A young man came up to him and said, "Pastor, I am so sorry we are going to lose you. When you came to us three years ago, I was a young man who did not care for God, man, or the Devil, but since listening to your beautiful sermons I have learned to love them all." That is the kind of sentiment that passes for love in these days. The apostle was speaking of the manifestation of divine life in the soul, a love that is absolutely unselfish.

"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing." You may say, "But I can't give my goods to feed the poor apart from love; can I?" Oh, yes, I may do all that from a desire to be seen of men. The Pharisees of old did their charity that way, and they sounded trumpets before them so people could see them. "Verily, they have their reward." There was no love there. It was merely hypoc-

ris. And then we read, "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing." I may be a religious zealot, so wedded to an idea that I am willing to die for it, and yet there may be no real love behind it all. Of course it took the love of Christ in the soul to enable the Christian martyrs to go to the stake singing for Jesus' sake, it took the love of Christ to cause those devoted believers to go forth to the lions, ready to die with a song of love in their hearts. But it is quite possible to die for an idea, to yield your body to the stake because of some great principle, and yet have no real love in the heart. So we see the uniqueness of love; it stands alone, and is distinct from mere "charity," as we call it.

In verses 4–7 we have the character of love. What is this love of which he is speaking? How may we know it? How may we recognize it when we see it? As we examine these verses phrase by phrase, I wish you would think of one blessed Person. If the apostle Paul had tried to give us a pen portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ, he could not have done better than to use the words that we have here. As you read these verses you can see the blessed Savior of men moving about in this world on His mission of love. So true is this that you could substitute the word *Christ* for the word *love*, or *charity* here. Let me show you. "Christ suffereth long, and is kind; Christ envieth not; Christ vaunteth not himself, is not puffed up, doth not behave himself unseemly, seeketh not his own, is not easily provoked." Was He ever provoked? Oh, yes. About what? About the wickedness, the sin, the hypocrisy of men. When they would have hindered His healing the poor woman in the synagogue because of their pretended regard for the sanctity of the Sabbath, Jesus looked round about upon them and was angry. There is an anger that is divine, but, "[love] is not *easily* provoked." "Christ thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This is indeed a character sketch of the Lord Jesus Christ. It tells me that it is only as Christ dwells in me that I will manifest these characteristics, and then I can truly say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). If I take this as a divine picture of what every man ought to be, if I dare to say that not until this is true of me am I really fit for a place with God in heaven, I might sink into utter despair if it depended upon me, for I never could measure up to this. There is so much in my heart of self, of evil, of unholiness, but as I receive Christ as my personal Savior, as I put my trust in Him, the One who died because of man's selfishness, sin, and unholiness, I am born again of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, and Christ comes to dwell in my heart by faith. Now in the measure in

which I yield myself to Him, He lives out His wonderful life through me, and thus I am able to manifest the love that is revealed in this chapter.

“[Love] suffereth long.” It does not become impatient when tried, when wronged, and when it has to face misunderstanding, and when people disapprove. Love moves on just as sweetly and graciously as when people do approve, and “[love] suffereth long, and is kind.” How much we need to realize that! Ella Wheeler Wilcox has said something that is not altogether true:

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many ways that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind
Is all this poor world needs.

That is a very pretty sentiment, but it is not altogether true. The world needs a great deal more than that; it needs God, it needs Christ. But the world does need people who can be kind. I am afraid many Christians are not always very kind.

I remember hearing of an old Scotch preacher in whose congregation were a number of folks who fancied they had attained a spiritual experience far beyond the majority of the members, a state of perfect holiness wherein all inbred sin had been removed from their very being, and because they were so holy they were extremely critical of other people and harsh in their judgments. The old minister was not much of a theologian, and was not able to meet their arguments in regard to the doctrine, but when he heard them censoring others, he would lean over the pulpit and say, “Remember, if you are not very kind, you are not very holy, because holiness and kindness cannot be separated.” “[Love] . . . is kind.” Oh, the kindness of God as seen in the Lord Jesus Christ!

And then, “[Love] envieth not,” or really, “love is never jealous.” Did it ever occur to you that jealousy implies selfishness? Love delights to see another honored and esteemed. Of course there is a holy jealousy. The Lord is a jealous God. He would have us altogether for Himself. But this is a very different thing to a carnal jealousy which makes us unhappy when others are preferred before us. Jesus ever took the lowest place and was content to be despised and rejected.

“[Love] vaunteth not itself.” In plain English, “love never brags.” Love never exalts itself or its ability; it never tries to draw attention to itself. And love “is not puffed up.” There is a Scripture that says, “Knowledge puffeth up, but [love] edifieth,” or buildeth up (1 Cor. 8:1). I think I know a great deal more than other people and so become conceited, puffed up over it, but real love does not puff up, it builds up.

"Doth not behave itself unseemly," or literally, "is never boorish." The finest gentleman in the world is the man who knows Christ best. I remember reading a history of the world written by an English writer, completed about the year 1600. In the course of his history he came down to the early years of the Christian era, and he said, "It was in these days that there appeared in Judea that Knightly Gentleman, Jesus Christ," and I was so taken aback, I thought, "I do not know whether I like that." I stopped to analyze it and then I thought, "Could words have been used that more truly described the life of my Lord here on earth?" What is a gentleman? Is it somebody born heir to some vast estate and perhaps having the right to put a title to his name? Not necessarily. A man might be heir to millions but be a perfect boor. A man might be the poorest of the poor and yet be controlled by divine love and so be a perfect gentleman. Have you never noticed the refining influence of the Lord Jesus Christ? Take a man brought out of the gutter and saved by grace, see how the Spirit of God quiets him, changes him, until his whole character becomes different. Love never behaves in a boorish way.

"[Love] . . . seeketh not her own." The apostle's word to those quarreling women in Philippi was, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). When divine love controls the heart, it will be others first instead of self first.

"[Love] . . . is not easily provoked." We read, "Be ye angry and sin not." A Puritan once said, "I am determined so to be angry as not to sin; therefore to be angry with nothing but sin." Sin may well stir my indignation but, "[Love] . . . is not easily provoked."

"[Love] . . . thinketh no evil." How apt we are to make snap judgments of people. One says, "I think everything she does is done ostentatiously." What business have you to be thinking those things? Love credits people with the best possible motives, and therefore because of that, "[love] . . . hopeth all things." Love may see something upon which a very bad construction may be put, but it waits a moment and says, "Could I put a better construction upon that? I will not put the wrong one if I can possibly find a good one. I will hope for the best. I will never be guilty of marring a brother's or a sister's reputation because of something said or done that looks unwise to me and yet might be innocent." That is love. And so, "[love] . . . endureth all things"—it is willing to suffer, for that is just the character of love.

In verses 8–13 we have the *permanence* or finality of love. Everything else may disappear but love abides. "[Love] never faileth." We read of prophecy, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail." Prophecy will be fulfilled eventually, but

love will continue forever. “Whether there be tongues, they shall cease.” We do not know exactly when they passed away from the church, but we have no evidence that there are men today who have the ability to preach in languages never learned, and the apostle uses a very strong word here, “Whether there be tongues, they shall *cease*.” It is an altogether different word from the word translated “fail.” He knew that the day would come when the gift of tongues would no longer be seen, but love would remain. “Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” Knowledge, in the sense that we have it now, only a partial thing, will vanish away in the light of the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto Him.

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” And now he uses a little illustration comparing the present with the days of our childhood, our glorious future with the years of maturity. “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” I wonder whether that is actually true of every one of us. I am afraid some of us are quite childish still. I know full-grown men and women who profess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but still have a great many characteristics of children. Let them have their own way and they are perfectly delightful to get along with, but cross them and they pout like little children. The apostle says, “When I became a man, I put away childish things.” In other words, I was through with childish ways.

May I make a plea for true Christian manhood and womanhood? Let us put away these little childish things that so often characterize us. One thing that often grieves my own heart is that there are so few Christian people content to do their duty as God shows it to them without human praise. As men and women in Christ we have put away childish things, and we are here to do the right as He shows it to us, and whether men praise or blame, what difference does it make? But in another sense, this is still the time of our childhood as compared with the glorious maturity that is coming when our Lord shall return and we shall be fully conformed to His blessed image. Someday we will put all these things away and will be just like Him.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly.” There were no glass windows in those days. They had a crude kind of glass, but it could not be used for windows. Sometimes they used a very thin horn which had been pressed out, and sometimes almost a transparent crystal was used. That may be what was referred to, but in all likelihood it is the brass mirror. You can see enough in a brass mirror to know whether your hat is on straight, but you cannot see what your complexion

is like, and so the apostle says that we are just like folk looking at themselves in a brass mirror. We see nothing as we shall see it by-and-by. "But then face to face: now I know in part"—I know through the revelation that God has given, and thank God for that! How little I would know without that, but there are still many things concerning which He has not yet given me information. How many questions there are that even the Bible does not answer. "But then shall I know even as also I am known." The exact tense, I believe, would be, "Even as also I have been known." I will know others and will know all mysteries in that coming day, even as God knows me now and has known me all down through the years.

"Now abideth faith"—because "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). "Hope"—because I am living in hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto Him. "[Love]"—for this is the manifestation of the divine life. "These three; but the greatest of these"—even at the present moment here on earth, before I enter eternity—"is [love]."

May God give us to manifest the love of Christ through yielding ourselves wholly to Him, that He may live out His life in us and then by-and-by when faith has changed to glad fruition, when our most wonderful hopes have all been accomplished, when we stand face to face with our blessed Lord, love will abide throughout all the ages to come, and we shall understand then what we cannot understand now, the love that moved the heart of God and led Him to send His only begotten Son into this dark world that we might live through Him. What a wonderful thing to know Christ. Let us go out and live Him before men!

THE BEST GIFTS

1 Corinthians 14:1–25

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it

may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. (vv. 1–25)

Here we have love in exercise for the edifying of the body of Christ. We have considered already the many diverse gifts of the Spirit as set forth in chapter 12. He divides to every man severally as He will. In this the Holy Spirit is sovereign. No one has the right to demand that he be given any certain gift or gifts as an evidence of the Spirit's baptism. What He gives will be for the edification of the church as a whole, not for the enjoyment or aggrandizement of some individual. While we are not told of any special limit, so far as time is concerned, yet we know both from Scripture and church history that most of the so-called

miraculous gifts passed away shortly after the Bible was completed. They are not needed now as they were at the beginning. Yet, if the Spirit so wills, He might give them today under special circumstances. But we need not be surprised because we do not see them in exercise. They served their purpose, a very useful one, in authenticating the message as divine, when these signs followed the proclamation of the truth. Now with God's complete revelation in our hands, we do not require signs to manifest it as the Word of the Lord. When preached in power, it authenticates itself.

Then in chapter 13 we have love, the manifestation of the divine nature, and this we know is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us. Apart from love the gifts are useless.

Now in chapter 14 we are told, "Follow after [love], and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." As a member of the body of Christ I should desire to be a means of blessing to my brethren and sisters in the Lord, and to be used of God in giving the gospel to a lost world. I can only do this right as I am filled with the Spirit and gifted by Him in some special way.

It is therefore quite in keeping with my Christian profession to seek to be at my best for God. Worldly ambition is obnoxious and unholy, but, on the other hand, there is a laudable ambition which I can consistently entertain, and that is to desire spiritual gifts. But I must be sure that I do this in love. Every gift is given for the blessing of the whole assembly, and not in any sense for the glory of the individual possessing that gift.

In the church of God as a whole and in the assembly of believers gathered together as a worshiping company, there is no place for mere fleshly display. If I am gifted of God in a measure in preaching the gospel, I am not to take advantage of that to exhibit my abilities ostentatiously or to gather people about myself. If I have been gifted of God to sing the fine old gospel songs that people enjoy hearing so much, I am not to use that talent to attract attention to myself or my voice, but I am to use it to give out a message which, winged by melody, will move human hearts that the spoken word might not reach. If I should be gifted of God to teach the Holy Scriptures, I am not to take advantage of that gift in order to exercise people's minds about strange and perplexing problems, which would make them think, perhaps, that I am a more deeply-taught man than most, but I am to make things as plain and simple as possible, in order that the saints may receive edification. This is the standard for using the gifts that God has given. All are to be exercised in love.

The apostle singles out one gift as that which we should earnestly covet, "Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." Take the great prophets

of the old dispensation: read carefully the entire seventeen prophetic books of the Old Testament, and you will be surprised to find how small a portion of those writings is devoted to foretelling future events. There are, indeed, many most remarkable predictions which have been fulfilled with the utmost particularity down through the centuries. There are many more that are yet to be fulfilled. But, on the other hand, the greater part of the prophetic books is taken up not with future events, but with endeavoring to bring home the truth of God to the hearts and consciences of His people. There is a difference between the teacher and the prophet. The teacher expounds the Scriptures and illuminates the mind and understanding. The prophet brings the truth home to the conscience in order that it may exercise people before God. I might take this letter of Paul to the Corinthians and perhaps through divine help be able to expound it so that my hearers may thoroughly understand just what it is that the Spirit of God is teaching, and yet their consciences might not be exercised in the least degree. Their hearts might not really be lifted unto God, though they were edified intellectually. But if I had the gift of prophecy, I might take exactly the same Scripture and, as the Spirit of God enables, I will press it home to heart and conscience, so that those who hear will go away into a secret place, kneel down and search themselves and ask God to enable them to go out to live the truth that they have been learning. That is the highest form of ministry.

This is brought out very clearly in the two verses that follow, where you have what may be called one of the show gifts, the gift of tongues. We read: "He that speaketh in a . . . tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." Suppose I had the ability, divinely given, without going to school to learn it, to speak the Chinese language in at least one of its many dialects, and suppose I should endeavor to exercise the wonderful gift the Spirit of God had given me and I should pour out my heart in public in Chinese. At once you would say, "We cannot understand a word that he is saying." Yet I myself might be quite happy and perfectly self-satisfied to think I was able to use such a remarkable gift. But others would not understand, unless Chinese were present. So you see the gift of speaking in tongues is not for the Christian; it is for the heathen. Let that gift be exercised where that tongue is spoken. Do not get up in a Christian assembly and take the time of God's people giving out something they cannot understand.

"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." It is this gift upon which the apostle lays so much stress. Notice the three aspects of real spiritual ministry:

First, the man who is divinely gifted to give a message from God speaks unto men for edification. They get something from him that is for their spiritual good. If I am able to open up the Word of God to you in a way that instructs and feeds your soul, then you are edified. It is a great thing to build up God's people.

Then, in the second place, the prophetic message is for exhortation. How you and I need the message of exhortation! We are so apt to slumber in our spiritual lives. That is the very meaning of the word *exhortation*, something to awaken, to arouse the one who has gone to sleep or become apathetic. How the Word of God comes home to the conscience in that way, to arouse people! I know some folks do not like that kind of Bible teaching. But the true servant of God will bring things home in a way to exercise the hearts of men to seek after God, and to show them their true state as He Himself sees it.

In the third place, true spiritual ministry is for comfort and encouragement, and how much you and I need comfort! Dr. Joseph Parker, the great London preacher, in addressing a group of young theologians, said, "Young gentlemen, always preach to broken hearts, and you will never lack for an audience." How many broken hearts, and how many bereaved ones there are! Trouble and distress of financial circumstances, all those things that come home so cruelly to the heart—trouble in one's own family! How much God's people need the word of comfort and the word of exhortation. "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

"He that speaketh in a . . . tongue edifieth himself." He enjoys it, but no one else does. You would understand this if I should try to sing a solo. If I get into the woods or out on the mountainside I just let myself out. I just love to sing. I delight in it there. If I were to do that in a crowd I might put someone else out of tune. Well, if I were to sing a solo, I might enjoy it thoroughly, but you would not, and there would be good reason. So, if one speaks in tongues he edifies himself, but others are not edified. Do not covet a gift that makes you as selfish as that. "But he that prophesieth edifieth the church." So the apostle says he would not slight the gift of tongues. If anyone has it, let him use it to the glory of God; but he wishes "rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."

So we conclude that we should desire spiritual gifts; and the gifts of the Spirit are not for anyone's individual enjoyment or glory, but for the edification of the entire church.

And now let me point out that the word *unknown* before "tongues," as found many times in this chapter, is in italics, and so does not represent anything in the

original text. Strictly speaking, the apostle was not thinking of unknown tongues, but of definite languages. The miracle of Pentecost consisted in the eleven apostles being empowered to preach the gospel in languages they had never learned, so that all who heard were able to understand them “in their own tongue wherein they were born.” We know of nothing like this today.

The next eight verses, as you see, are all very intimately connected, and in them the apostle resumes the subject which he began in the early part of the chapter. The Corinthians were very anxious for what may be called the “showy” gifts of the Spirit, the gifts that would attract widespread attention, particularly the gift of speaking in tongues. Through this remarkable gift the gospel was spread in a wonderful way in the earliest period of the church of God. It was nothing like the rhapsody which people give way to when they utter strange, weird sounds, which may in truth be called *unknown* tongues, for they are unknown to heaven or earth. But the tongues here referred to were definite languages, and one can see at once why the apostle should rebuke display of such a gift when there were no people present who could understand the language. The man himself would get a great thrill in speaking in a language that was strange and incomprehensible to others; but there would be no blessing to the church.

In the public assembly of the people of God everything should be done unto edifying. So the apostle says: If I myself should come speaking in tongues, speaking in various languages, “what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?” We have no record that he ever had to learn the languages in which he spoke to the people. He spoke to the Greeks in their own language, to the Romans in theirs, to the Hebrews he spoke in their tongue, and to the various barbarians in the tongues to which they were accustomed.

Suppose I should come before the church and speak in those tongues, what would I profit you unless I should give you the interpretation of what I had said, or unless the Spirit of God should enable someone else to interpret it in order that you might understand? “What shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?” If he is able to reveal the language in which he speaks, or if he prophesies to them, or teaches them, which we are to understand by the word *doctrine*, then they would be edified. With things that have no life, like the great organ or the piano, if every tone were exactly the same, what edification could there be? No one would understand what was being played. “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?” If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, if

the trumpeter goes out ahead of the army, but gives forth notes that nobody can understand, the soldiers are unable to respond. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" Just in the same way, if a man stands up in a congregation and gives out sounds that have no meaning to the people, there is no edification. Here is a good rule: "So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air." In this I think the apostle not only rebukes the vanity of ministers who delight to use the pulpit as a place to display their education and culture, but also the use of language that is far above the heads of the people to whom they are ministering. Charles H. Spurgeon said: "I am afraid that many of my ministerial brethren must imagine that when Scripture tells them to 'Feed my sheep,' it means 'Feed my giraffes,' for they put the food so high that people would have to be giraffes to reach it." Scripture says, "Feed my sheep." Always put the food down where the sheep can get it. It should be the ambition of the preacher of the Word to use language so simple and so plain that everybody can understand. A few months ago a lady brought to me a little boy about ten years of age, and she said, "I want my little grandson to meet you. I hope you won't be offended about what he said. I had been telling him about you and he wanted to hear you. He said to me, 'Why, grandma, he is not a great preacher; I could understand every word he said.'" I replied, "Well, my dear madam, I consider that a great compliment." I hope you will always pray that when I stand up to minister the Word, I may do it in such a way that the youngest child, as well as the oldest saint, may understand every word; because if we do not, we are just speaking into the air.

The apostle says there are many different voices in the world, and all of them have some signification, but if the person listening does not understand the signification, they go for nothing. So if I speak in a tongue that others do not understand, I shall be as a barbarian to them and they shall be barbarians to me. He says, "Since you are so 'zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church.'" Try to get from God that which will be the greatest blessing to the people to whom you minister. "Wherefore let him that speaketh in a . . . tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a . . . tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful." I may have within me a great urge and a great sense of need, and I might express it in sounds, but my understanding is not praying, and the apostle repudiates anything like that. Suppose I am able to pray in Latin, but do not understand Latin. People went through long prayers in Latin in the early days. The spirit may have been praying, yet the understanding was unfruitful. The Reformation brought people back to use the

common language of the countries in which they lived in addressing God and in the worship of God, so that the understanding might go with the spirit. "What is it, then? I will pray with the spirit." Certainly I should pray with the spirit; my inmost being must be aroused; but "I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

What he has said of preaching or public ministry of the Word is just as true of singing. Therefore the importance of singing hymns that express scriptural truth. There are many songs which we sing because we like the tunes; but sometimes the words are not in accordance with Scripture at all. Some people think that songs must be suitable if the words are from the Bible. Take the book of Psalms, which were written before redemption was accomplished. David sang, "Turn away thy wrath from me." I won't sing that. Why? Because divine wrath has been turned from me. It fell upon my blessed Substitute, and I know I won't come into judgment, for I am saved from judgment. There are many lovely things in the Psalms in which all our hearts may go out in worship and praise, but we are to sing from the standpoint of people who have already been redeemed. There should not be any question as to our relation with God. If we do not understand this, we shall always be in confusion.

"Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" In the early church when a man gave thanks the rest were to say Amen. But they must understand then what he is saying; otherwise one might verily give thanks well, but the others would not be edified.

"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." He did not boast of this, but stated a fact. "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in a . . . tongue." Now you get the distinction between the two. I would rather, he said, speak five words in a language they can understand, than ten thousand words in a tongue. When he went out to the barbarians he was glad to talk to them in a tongue, but when he came into the assembly he would not speak to them in a tongue. I know some dear people who, I am sorry to say, would rather speak five words in an absolutely unknown tongue than ten thousand words in good, plain English. If they could only feel the thrill of some power taking hold of them, and speak in some weird language that no one could understand! Yet it is only selfishness. It is the selfish desire to have something that other people do not have. The apostle says, I do not want to attract attention to myself or my gift. "Brethren, be not children in understanding." The folk that are running after these things are like children. "Howbeit in malice be

ye children.” Have the sweet, kindly spirit of children toward one another. “But in understanding be men.” Then he goes back to the book of the prophet Isaiah. He shows how the prophet had to reprove Israel: “With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak to this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.” God said, “I will send Gentiles to speak to them.” And for more than nineteen hundred years, He has proclaimed the gospel to the Jews through the converted Gentiles. “For all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.” One may have the ability to speak so as to reach the conscience, but that would not necessarily bring them to Christ. “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not,” a sign that the Spirit of God is working in power.

“But prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.” Then he says in effect: if therefore the whole congregation come together in one place and everybody is able to speak with tongues, one and another rising and speaking in strange languages, and there are unsaved people sitting about, “if . . . there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” People would say just that. They would go away saying, “What a lot of lunatics they were! I could not understand a word.” “But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.” When the servants of God proclaim His truth in the power of the Spirit, we may expect the careless to be awakened, and the anxious to be led into assurance and to know that God is speaking through human lips to their souls.

LECTURE 31

GODLY ORDER IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE SAINTS

1 Corinthians 14:26–40

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak

in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order. (vv. 26–40)

We are now to consider the practical working out of all this in the public assemblies of the people of God. Instinctively, we feel, I think, as we come to these verses, that they speak of conditions, of order in the early churches, of which we know very little today. This ought surely to lead us to search and try our ways, and to see how far we have departed from the simplicity of primitive Christianity.

I do not mean to imply that there is not a certain amount of liberty given in Scripture to adapt ourselves and the order of our meetings to the times in which we live and the recognized customs prevailing among different races and nations, because it is clear that we are not under restraint as to this. We are told in this very passage to “let all things be done decently and in order.” This might be rendered “respectably and by arrangement.” The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of liberty, and He does not seek to press everyone into one mold. He is the Spirit of a sound mind, and He expects us to use God-given common sense in carrying on the work of the Lord, and in the conduct of our assemblies.

But in these closing verses of this chapter He lays down certain principles which should govern us as we are gathered together for worship and the ministry of the Word. It is God who gathers His people around His blessed Son, our Risen Lord, who says, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst” (Matt. 18:20). While these words had reference originally, as the context shows, to a prayer meeting, they really apply to all assemblies of the saints of God, whether they come together for worship, for ministry, or for intercession. On such occasions all should be subject to the Holy Spirit’s direction.

You get the practical application of this in the verses that follow: “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.” Because of the liberty they had in Christ, those early Christians were in the habit of participating in the meetings as their own feelings prompted them. One would sing a psalm, another would speak in a tongue, another would interpret, another had a doctrine, someone would have a fresh

revelation from God; and it resulted in sad confusion. The apostle shows that all things should be done in an orderly and godly manner and with the edification of the whole company in view, not the personal enjoyment of some gifted individual.

"If any man speak in a . . . tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course," not several at one time, and let there be an interpreter. "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God." One might say, "But it is the Lord who has given me the gift of tongues, so I must speak out in meeting." But this does not necessarily follow, for Paul says, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." It is plain that even if one has such a gift, if he could not interpret, he must remain silent in the church. This shows that a tongue is a definite language, which might be interpreted if another understood it, so that all might understand and be edified.

And in regard to prophesying, let them speak two or three, not a large number in one service, and let the others judge; that is, in the sense of discerning; they are to weigh all carefully before God and compare it with the Word. None of us has a right to say, "This is the truth of God and I demand a hearing." Our Lord Himself urged the people to search the Scriptures. The preacher is to speak, the people are to listen, and then to compare what they hear with the Word. But if another would speak, let the first hold his peace; that is, wait until the other is through. Everything is to be done in an orderly way. "Ye may all prophesy one by one." But not more than three in one meeting, lest there be confusion instead of spiritual edification. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

And then in the next few verses we have something over which there has been a great deal of controversy in the church of God, but there should not be. If one would speak in tongues, but there is no interpreter, he is to keep silent. If a prophet is speaking and another would follow, let the first keep silent. Now the next verse: "Let your women keep silence in the churches." Surely, "keep silence" means exactly the same here as in the other instances. But by "churches" he does not mean buildings. He is not telling us that no woman could give a testimony or offer prayer in a religious building. The word for church is properly "assembly"; and what he is saying is this: "When you are gathered together in your regular church service, let the women keep silent in the assembly, for they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." Now we need to remember this is by the Holy Spirit as truly as any other part of the epistle. He said it through Paul, the inspired apostle. Some have objected that Paul was an old bachelor and did not like women! He was the inspired servant of God and wrote as directed by the Holy Spirit. Now this does not touch the question

raised in the eleventh chapter, where women, providing they had their heads covered, were permitted to pray and prophesy in some other sphere. But here the reference is to the official meeting of the church when all are gathered together as a worshipping company. If at such a time the women hear something they do not understand, do not let them interrupt the meeting by inquiring aloud nor by seeking to teach. Let them ask their husbands at home. "Well," a lady said to me, "that is not meant for me; I have no husband." The word for "husband" is elsewhere rendered "man." Let them ask their men at home. Neither men nor women were to interrupt in a public assembly, but let them discuss things at home if there is something they do not understand. In these days, it is often the men that do not understand and they ask the women at home! It should be noted that in those early days only a few women, comparatively, could read or write. You have to take into consideration the time when the letter was written, when slavery and debasement of women were common. But I think the principle is clear enough. And then, lest there should be any misunderstanding, the apostle asks, "Came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?" Well, the Word of God came to us. Very well, then. We are not to decide what we are going to accept or reject. God Himself speaks with authority. We are to do as He commands. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." What things? Why, the things we have just been reading in this passage. They are the commandments of the Lord. But if any one objects to this, Paul puts him down among those who are ill-taught. "If any man be ignorant," just let him take the place of ignorance and say he does not understand, but do not let him pretend to be wiser than those who obey the injunction of the Lord.

He concludes this section with these words: "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." So if there is anybody attending the meetings of the church who can talk in a language he has never learned, let there be an interpreter so that people may understand; but do not try to pass off something that cannot be interpreted. The apostle is speaking of definite languages.

And so from chapter 10 to the close of chapter 14, the Spirit has given us the divine order for the assembly of God, and he adds the words we have referred to already, "Let all things be done decently," that is, "respectably," "and in order," or, "by arrangement"; that is, such as the Word of God authorizes, not substituting an order which it condemns.

I realize that this is a section over which there has been a great deal of controversy, but it is one that the Spirit of God has given for the edification of the

whole church, and we shall always find our greatest blessing as we are subject to His direction. Sometimes we think that we can improve upon what God has commanded, but we may be sure of this: that His ways are always best. This is not only true in the assembly of God, but in all details of every individual life.

Women have a wide sphere for service and testimony outside of the worship meeting of the assembly. The home is preeminently woman's sphere. In social gatherings too she has abundant opportunity to witness for Christ. No one is more peculiarly adapted to work among children and to help her own sex than a godly, well-instructed woman. In visitation work, in the sickroom, and elsewhere, her services are invaluable. If God has restricted her so that it is not for her to usurp the place of pastor or teacher in the public assembly, it is not to slight her gifts, nor to ignore the value of her services elsewhere. The true test of love for Christ is obedience to His Word. He knows best what each one of us should do in order to glorify Him. Our happiness should consist in acting in accordance with His revealed Word. This honors God and glorifies the Head of the church, our blessed Lord.

A Priscilla may teach an Apollos, a Mary Magdalene may be the risen Lord's messenger to His faint-hearted disciples, a regenerated woman of Samaria may evangelize the men of her city, a Dorcas may serve by ministering to the comfort of the poor, a Phoebe may be a deaconess of the assembly, but a woman, no matter how gifted and godly, is not to take the place of the man in the assembly of God, but to set an example of lowly subjection to the revealed will of God, assured that He values devoted obedience above any possible form of activity, however much it may be approved by those who have never learned to let God's Word be the supreme authority.

LECTURE 32

THE GOSPEL AND THE WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am

what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. (vv. 1–11)

It is evident that there was a small party in the Corinthian assembly who had imbibed Sadducean notions and were seeking to foist them upon believers as the truth of God. They denied the reality of a physical resurrection. We need not suppose that they went so far as to deny spiritual survival after death, but they were like many today who refuse to accept the teaching of Scripture that the physical body of Christ came forth from the tomb in resurrection, and hence that the bodies of all men will eventually be raised.

Paul meets this serious error in this great resurrection section. As we ponder it and enter into its wonderful teaching, we are almost thankful that the error was permitted to arise so early in order that it might be met by the pen of inspiration. How much we would have lost had there been no occasion to write this magnificent chapter!

In preparing to combat, yes, to annihilate the false teaching, the apostle first gives a restatement of the evangel. He shows that there is no gospel to preach to dying men if the resurrection be denied. "Jesus and the resurrection," we know, summarized the proclamation, not only of Paul, but of the Twelve. Festus wondered at the strange "superstition" about "one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Yes, Jesus—the One who died, lives again, and lives in a material body, though glorified, and so marvelously changed as compared with what it was before the cross. But it bears the print of the nails still. On the throne the risen Christ appears "as a Lamb that had been slain."

In verses 1–11 we have the restatement of the gospel, and the witnesses of the resurrection, which alone give validity to that message of redeeming grace.

"Moreover, brethren," he says, "I declare unto you the gospel." This gospel, this good news for lost sinners, he had preached and they had received. It was the gospel of grace, and in this they stood; for we need to remember that our standing is in grace as truly as our salvation is by grace. Through this gospel they were saved, providing their faith was genuine. He is not intimating in verse 2 that some who had believed the gospel might be lost at last, but rather that continuance in the faith was the evidence of reality. This is important. It is always true that "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." It is quite possible to give a mere mental assent to the truth of the gospel and by baptism and lip profession to take the place of a Christian, when actually there has been

no work of grace in the soul. This is to “believe in vain.” It is a mere empty faith which accomplishes nothing so far as the salvation of the individual is concerned. Real faith will be emphasized by godly living, and “he who hath begun a good work” in the believer “will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

In verses 3–4 he gives us the basic truths of the gospel, as he had preached it in Corinth and elsewhere. First, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” There are three things to be noticed here: “Christ died.” That is a fact of history, and in itself might not mean anything more than the death of a martyr. But, second, “for our sins” is a definite doctrinal statement and explains the reason for that death. It was an expiatory sacrifice. “He gave himself a ransom for all.” He took the sinner’s place and bore the sinner’s judgment. He died that we might never die. Third, this was “according to the scriptures.” Throughout the Old Testament, in type and actual prophetic declaration, we find the sacrificial, atoning death of Christ everywhere before us. All the sacrifices of former dispensations pictured His one offering of Himself upon the cross. The prophets looked forward to that great event as the supreme fact of revelation. Psalms 22; 69; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 12–13, and many other Scriptures, set this forth. God had declared in Leviticus 17:11, “The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls.” Yet we know that it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should put away sin. Only through the propitiatory death of Christ could this be accomplished, and, thank God, it has indeed taken place, and all in accordance with the Scriptures.

Then, observe, “He was buried.” This suggests the reality of His death. It was not, as Mrs. Eddy has intimated in her blasphemous chapter on Atonement, His *seeming* death, but He was actually dead, and because He was dead they buried His precious body in Joseph’s new tomb. But, thank God,

Death could not keep its prey,
He tore the bars away.

And so we come to the last point of this declaration of the gospel: “He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” The resurrection of Christ was the Father’s expression of satisfaction in the work His Son so blessedly accomplished on the cross, when He gave Himself a ransom for our sins. The sin question settled, God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the highest glory, exalted to be a Prince and a Savior.

We need to remember that apart from His physical resurrection there was no proof that God had accepted His work as an atonement for our sins. But having

been delivered up to death for our offences, He has been raised again for our justification. Some prefer to render this, "Because of our justification." His death so fully met all the righteous claims of God's throne against our sins that now God has declared, by bringing Him back from the dead, that there is no longer a barrier to our complete justification.

The physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is fundamental. There is no room for human theories here. It is not merely a question of survival after death. It will not do to say, as one has done, that "the body of Jesus sleeps in a Syrian tomb, but His soul goes marching on." This is to deny His resurrection altogether. His soul was never dead. His body died, and it was His body that was raised again.

Note that the resurrection of Christ is ascribed to each Person of the Trinity. All had part in that glorious work. The Lord Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . He spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:19, 21). He was "raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. 6:4; see also Heb. 13:20). And His resurrection is attributed to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11). There is no contradiction. All is blessed harmony. The entire Godhead was concerned in the resurrection.

And His resurrection, as His death, was also according to the Scriptures. In Leviticus 23 we see this pictured in the Feast of the Firstfruits on the morrow after the Passover Sabbath. In Psalm 16:10 and Isaiah 53:10 we see that for Him the path of life lay through death, but that after death He was to see His seed and prolong His days. In Psalm 110 we see Him as the Risen One taking His seat at God's right hand in heaven.

We have the witnesses to the resurrection in verses 5-8. God would give positive testimony regarding this great fact to those who are appointed to go out and proclaim the message of salvation through the crucified and risen Christ throughout the world.

His many visible appearances to so large a number of reputable witnesses, the fact that His dead body could never be located anywhere, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power, and the confident assurance and new bravery of His apostles, together with the way God set His seal upon their ministry in miracles of healing and the salvation of thousands, all alike proved that Jesus had vanquished death and come forth from Joseph's new rock-hewn tomb to die no more. That tomb is still empty and ever shall be. The body that once lay in that inner crypt, enswathed in the linen cloths, came out of its cerements like a butterfly leaving the chrysalis shell when God's appointed hour had struck (John 20:4-8).

It was not simply the survival of the spirit after the death of the body, for although that might prove immortality, it would not be resurrection. What

Scripture plainly declares is that *the body that hung on the cross is the body that was raised from the grave*. It still bore the print of the nails and the wound in the side (John 20:27). Long years afterward, John the beloved saw in the midst of the throne “a Lamb as it had been slain.” The marks of His passion will be upon His body forever (Rev. 5:6).

Thy wounds, Thy wounds, Lord Jesus,
 Those deep, dark wounds, they tell
 The sacrifice that frees us
 From sin and death and hell.

They bound Thee once forever
 To all who own Thy grace;
 No power those bonds shall sever,
 No time those scars efface.

And He has said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” He is “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20). His literal bodily resurrection is the pledge that eventually “all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth” (John 5:28–29), some to life eternal, and others, alas, to everlasting woe.

It is true that a great change had come over His body in resurrection. He could enter a room when all doors were locked. He could appear and disappear at will. And so we are told in regard to ourselves that what is sown in burial is not the body that shall be (1 Cor. 15:36–38). Nevertheless, there is positive identity. “It is sown . . . it is raised” (1 Cor. 15:43–44). *The body that died will live again*, but under altogether new and wonderful conditions.

Paul speaks of himself as having seen the risen Lord, and as one born out of due time. We are apt to think that this means that he was born much later than others, but the word he uses precludes any such thought. It really means, one born *before* the time. He is thinking of that glorious day when the risen, glorified Christ is to appear on earth once more, and His people Israel will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and as they recognize Him as their Lord and Savior the nation will be born in a day. Paul had known that experience already. He first saw Christ in resurrection and, receiving Him as Savior, became one of the new creation company.

He could never forget that he had once been an opponent of Christ and a persecutor of His church. He felt that he was not fit to be called an apostle because of this, and yet he could rejoice in the infinite grace that had made him

what he was—the messenger of that same Christ, whom he had once hated, to the Gentile world. As he went from country to country and from people to people, making known this glorious gospel, God wrought in him in a mighty way, so that he could say in all humility, “I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” However, he would not stress the work of the servant, but rather the message that the servant carried to men. Whoever the preacher might have been, when people believed the message they were saved.

Let me remind you again that apart from His bodily resurrection we could have no proof that God had accepted His propitiatory work, but that the way into the holiest was now opened up for all who would draw nigh, trusting His precious blood as the only ground of redemption. In this great resurrection chapter the inspired writer insists on the absolute necessity of Christ’s rising again in order that there might be validity to His death as an atonement for sin. “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

It is useless to laud Jesus as a teacher while denying His bodily resurrection. He Himself predicted it. He declared that He must be rejected and go into death and rise from the dead the third day. His disciples could not understand it at the time, but that empty tomb and the subsequent appearance of their Lord in His resurrection body made all clear. Then they remembered His words. And after His ascension to heaven in that same body, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, they went everywhere declaring His resurrection from the dead. Apart from this they would have had no gospel to preach, and apart from this there is no message for sin-laden, condemned humanity today. The proclamation that has brought life and blessing to untold millions through all the Christian centuries is that embodied in Romans 10:9–10: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Believe what? Confess what? That He who died for our sins has been raised again for our justification, and now sits enthroned at God’s right hand in His literal, glorified body, exalted to be a Prince and a Savior. This is the basis of all gospel testimony and the only sure foundation upon which our salvation rests.

He has said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” We rest upon His Word and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

LECTURE 33

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, THE PLEDGE OF OURS

1 Corinthians 15:12–20

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (vv. 12–20)

In these verses the Holy Spirit develops for us and vigorously defends one of the great fundamental truths of Christian testimony. As we have noticed already, there were some in the Corinthian assembly who were raising questions as

to the bodily resurrection of the saints. I do not suppose that they thought for one moment that people cease to exist when they die. One can hardly think of any real Christian believing that, but they doubtless thought, being influenced largely by the pagan philosophies with which they were familiar before their conversion, that the spirit lived on in another world, but as far as the body was concerned, when death came and it was laid away in the tomb, that was the end of it. They never expected to meet their loved ones again in physical form or to take again a material body. The apostle meets that as a definite error and shows what serious consequences such a view would necessarily involve. He asks, "If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" This is the very foundation of Christianity. Everywhere the apostles went they preached Jesus and the resurrection. Our faith rests upon that.

The two great truths that Scripture teaches are that He was delivered up to death because of our sins, and that He was raised again as the token of God the Father's satisfaction in the work that His Son accomplished. Thus as the risen One He ever lives, "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25). Some today have fallen into a similar error and teach that our Lord Jesus Christ never came out of the grave in His material body. They admit His existence in spirit, but deny His physical resurrection. But the great evidence that was given to the Christians of the earliest days that the Lord Jesus had actually settled the sin question, that redemption was completed, was the fact that He came out of the tomb in the very body that had gone into it, though changed in a most wonderful way. Nevertheless His was a real human body, and we know that it bore in the palms of the hands the print of the nails. There was still the mark where the Roman spear had pierced His side, and if I read my Bible correctly, I believe the raised body of the Lord Jesus will bear those marks for all eternity. In this it will differ from the bodies of all the saints.

I do not think there is any reason to believe that those who have been martyred for Christ's sake will bear any evidence of suffering in their bodies; there will be no scar, neither spot nor blemish, nor any such thing. Our bodies will be absolutely perfect when raised and glorified. Why then should the body of our Lord Jesus bear those scars that speak of His sufferings and of His passion? Because these will be the visible evidences for all to contemplate throughout the ages to come that the very same Jesus who died for our sins upon the cross has been raised in the power of an endless life. The apostle John had a vision of heaven long years after the ascension of our Lord, and when he described the glorious central throne and other thrones surrounding it, he said, "I beheld, and lo, in

the midst of the throne and of the [living] ones, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6). That is, the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ had upon it the evidences that He was the One who had once been slain, who had been sacrificed on Calvary for our redemption. One of our poets has written:

I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
As redeemed by His side I shall stand,
I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
By the print of the nails in His hand.

Yes, He lives in heaven in the very body in which He once walked this earth, but that body is now changed and glorified. Christian testimony begins with this, and if one is seeking the way of life, if he inquires, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer comes in unmistakable clearness, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9 RV). Therefore, we have no right to think of any man as a Christian who denies the physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised." What if Christ be not raised? Some say, "If He is living in heaven, is that not sufficient?" No! "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." If our Lord Jesus Christ did not come forth triumphant from that tomb, then we have no gospel to preach to lost men. If the body of Jesus still sleeps in the tomb, then you and I are absolutely hopeless, there is no salvation for us. The fact that He rose from the dead is the proof that the offering-up of Himself upon the cross satisfied the claims of divine righteousness, and met every requirement of infinite holiness. God Himself raised Him from the dead in token of His satisfaction in His work, and now sets Him forth a Prince and a Savior. This was the message the apostles preached.

Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified," and that should be true of every one of us. But that was not all that he preached, for he preached Christ raised from the dead and Christ exalted to God's right hand, for he says: "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

Somebody may ask, "Why do you say that if Christ be not risen there is no way of knowing that redemption is an accomplished fact?" You see, when our Lord was here on earth, He told His disciples that He was going to die. "The

Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). But He also told them, "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:7). If that last statement of the Lord Jesus Christ has never been fulfilled, then He stands convicted of false testimony. He either was Himself deluded in thinking that He was the Savior, the Redeemer who was to die for sinners and rise again, or else He was a deliberate deceiver. It is His resurrection, the fulfillment of His own prediction, that proves that He was the sacrifice for sin which He proclaimed Himself to be. Thank God, that testimony is true. We saw previously how God gave abundant witness to the resurrection of His beloved Son, how more than five hundred saw Him after He rose from the dead, and we remember the statement made by Horace Bushnell, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is absolutely the best attested fact in ancient history." You cannot think of any other incident in ancient history that has anything like the number of witnesses to its truth as we have to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My sins nailed Him to the cross. He, the sinless One, took my place and died under the judgment of God, but after the sin question was settled, after He had poured out His life, having died for us, three days were permitted to elapse to prove the reality of His death, then God brought Him back from the dead to declare His acceptance of the work of His Son. The resurrection is the testimony that God is satisfied and now can open His arms in love to every poor sinner in all the world and proclaim a full, free and eternal salvation for all who believe, through the work that His Son has accomplished.

"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." The only way that I know that my sins are gone is because He who made Himself responsible for them, who died for them, now sits enthroned at God's right hand, and there are no sins on Him there.

I have often tried to illustrate it thus: Let my two hands speak of two persons. Let my left hand speak of my blessed Lord Jesus Christ and my right hand speak of myself, a sinful man. My Bible has a red cover; we will let it speak of my crimson sins, of my scarlet guilt, and as this red-covered Book lies on this right hand, let it be a picture of myself with those crimson sins all resting upon my soul. What am I going to do about it? I cannot cleanse my own heart. "If I wash myself with snow water and make [myself] never so clean," says Job, "yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (Job 9:30-31). I cannot cleanse my heart, I cannot put away my sins. But see, here is the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, illustrated by this left hand of mine. There is no scarlet Book

resting upon that hand because He was the sinless One, He knew no sin of thought or word or deed, He was absolutely the Holy One. But in grace He went to that cross of shame and was nailed upon the tree on Calvary's hill, and when He hung there, "Jehovah laid on him the iniquity of us all." I transfer this red Book to the hand that represents Jesus. That crimson load that rested on me was transferred to Him when He hung on the cross, for then He was bearing the load of our sins. That explains the darkness that enwrapped His soul, the cry of anguish, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The Holy One who knew no sin,
 God made Him sin for us;
 The Saviour died our souls to win,
 Upon the shameful cross.

Having borne sin's judgment He descended to the grave and lay there for three days and three nights. During that interval no one in all the world knew whether His work was satisfactory, no one knew whether He had really settled the sin question. "*We thought*," said the troubled disciples, "that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). They had no way of knowing whether it was true or not until, when the first day of the week came, He rose in triumph from the grave, and broke the bands of death asunder and now that hand, which represents Christ, has no red load upon it, for I have hidden that which stands for that load in this desk. There are no sins upon the risen Christ, for He has left them all behind in His open grave and has ascended to God's right hand without them. The Irishman was right when he said, "What a wonderful salvation! If anybody will have to be kept out of heaven because of my sins, it will have to be Jesus; but, blessed be God, they cannot keep Him out, He is there already." The resurrection is the proof that God is satisfied. I am not now in my sins, I know that Christ has put them all away, His resurrection tells me that since I have put my trust in Him I shall never again have to face that question.

The apostle concludes this section with these words, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." If Jesus has never been raised from the dead, then we are in a hopeless state, those who have trusted in Him are trusting in a bruised reed, we who are counting solely upon this risen Lord and upon the work He did have believed in vain. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men," not exactly, "most miserable"—for I suppose there *are* other very miserable men

living for the Devil—but what he really says, I believe, is, “We are of all men most to be pitied,” for we have staked everything on the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of our faith in Him we have given up the world and its pleasures and follies, we have become strangers and pilgrims in this scene, and now if there is no risen Christ, if this is all a mistake, we are going to lose both worlds. We gladly gave up this world because we thought we saw another above our heads, but that is only a dream, a fantasy, if Christ be not risen, and so “we are of all men most to be pitied.” The unconverted man can at least enjoy this present world, but the converted man says, “There is nothing here for my heart, it has been won by that One who has gone over yonder, and for His name’s sake I have surrendered the things that other men live for down here.” But what a blunder, what a mistake, if Christ be not risen! I am simply following a will-o’-th’-wisp that will land me at last in darkness and despair.

However, the apostle does not close this section with any such dreary suggestion. He says, “But now *is* Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” There is no question about it. We know that He who died has been raised again. He Himself said, “I lay down my life that I may take it again.” He was put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit. “The God of peace . . . brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep” (Heb. 13:20). Christ *is* risen, and His resurrection is the earnest of ours. He has become “the firstfruits of them that slept.” Every Israelite understood that figure. The days of planting and the days of cultivation had gone by, the summer was ending, the harvest days just beginning, and the Israelite went out in his field and saw a fast ripening sheaf. He plucked it and presented it to the Lord in the temple or at the tabernacle gate as the firstfruits, the earnest of the coming harvest, and by-and-by when a few more days or weeks had gone by, he went back to that field and the ripened grain was everywhere, but the great harvest was like the sheaf of the firstfruits, it was the same in character, and so our Lord Jesus is the firstfruits of resurrection, “the firstfruits of them that slept.” By-and-by will come the day when all His own will be called forth from the tombs. That will be the glorious harvest and in that day every other one will be like the firstfruits. We shall be like Him, our blessed, glorious Lord; we too shall have resurrection bodies, we too shall be forever triumphant over death, and throughout an eternity of bliss we shall glorify the One who has redeemed us to Himself.

LECTURE 34

THE PAGEANT OF RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:21–28

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. (vv. 21–28)

Following the apostle's argument that the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the basis of our hope for eternity, he makes it plain that this is not a debatable question, it is not something about which those professing the name of Christ may have different opinions. It is a fundamental fact, "Now *is* Christ

risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." He has come out of the grave as a sample of the great harvest which is yet coming forth from the tomb at His return.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." It was Adam as federal head of the race who plunged our entire humanity into death and judgment by his sin. But the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, has gone down into death; He has triumphed over it; He has robbed it of all its terror; and He has come forth a victor. And now through Him comes the resurrection of the dead, whether of course the resurrection of the righteous dead or the wicked dead, all shall come forth from the tomb through Him. The emphasis here is upon the fact that it is the Man Christ Jesus who calls the dead to life, and that is what we should expect, for God sets the one over against the other. The first man plunged the race into ruin, the Second Man brings redemption. In our emphasis upon the deity of the Lord Jesus we must never belittle or in any way lose sight of the perfection of His humanity. He is as truly Man as if He had never been God, and He is as truly God as if He had never become Man.

"There is . . . one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5-6); and it is the Son of Man whose voice shall eventually be heard by all the dead; first by the righteous dead, the saved dead, when He comes again to call His own to be with Himself, and then at last by the unsaved dead when they are summoned from the tomb to judgment, for Scripture knows nothing of a general resurrection. It distinctly teaches two resurrections. Our Lord speaks of those who shall be rewarded in "the resurrection of the just," and we read that there "shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust." The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life." That is the first resurrection. "They that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." That is the other one. In Revelation 20:6 we are told, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (Rev. 20:5).

In this chapter the apostle of course has specially in mind the resurrection of the righteous, because he began the chapter by saying, "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand." And that gospel is that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to

the scriptures,” and He is coming again to complete the work that He began. So we read in verse 22, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The term, “in Adam,” included all who received their natural life from Adam. As we have pointed out, he was the head of a race and we are all his children by natural birth. Every person in the world is in Adam by natural birth, and over all of Adam’s race hangs the death sentence. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Just as the term, “in Adam,” takes in an entire race, so the term, “in Christ,” takes in a race, but naturally a narrower, a smaller, group than is included “in Adam,” for we are all in Adam by nature, but only a limited number are in Christ by grace.

In speaking of some relatives of his Paul calls them his “kinsmen who also were in Christ before me.” They may not have been in Adam before him; I do not know whether they were older than he; but he says they were “in Christ” before he was. I often wonder if that was not one reason why Paul had that remarkable experience on the Damascus turnpike. They had probably been praying for him, and in answer to their prayers God broke him down and saved him. We are “in Christ” only through a second birth, through becoming members of a new creation. Just as we receive our natural life from Adam we received divine life from the risen glorified Christ, and we are then said to be “in Christ.” And so it is the resurrection of the just that Paul has in view.

“In Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order.” The word *order* was a military term in those days, and was used to describe the different companies of soldiers. We would say, “Every one after his own cohort.” “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” When He returns, when He descends in glory to the upper air, He will give that quickening shout of which we read both in the latter part of this chapter and in 1 Thessalonians 4: “And the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (vv. 16–17).

“Then cometh the end.” I do not know that we need that italicized word, *cometh*, for that does not represent anything in the original. It is, “Then the end.” “They that are Christ’s at his coming. . . . Then the end,” when the resurrection will be completed, when the glorious kingdom reign of our Lord Jesus will have come to an end, “when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” Our Lord Jesus Christ is now sitting at the Father’s right hand until this earth shall be made His footstool, and when He descends, He will take the kingdom and will

reign for a thousand wonderful years. He will bring in that age when righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD" (Hab. 2:14). During the thousand years the Lord will exercise righteous government and righteous judgment in this scene. It comes to a close with the passing away of the material universe as we know it.

Then comes the day of judgment, when the wicked, raised from their graves, will appear at the Great White Throne and sentence be given according to their works. When the mediatorial kingdom is ended all will be handed back to the Father, that God may be all in all. Christ may be likened to the receiver of this world. Suppose a business in San Francisco is owned by a firm of three persons in New York City. They send a manager out to take charge of the business, but this manager proves to be dishonest and incompetent, and the business is in inextricable difficulties. One member says, "You allow me to go out there and act as receiver, and I will try to straighten everything up and put the business on its feet." He goes out there, takes charge of everything, goes over all the books, and finds out where the crookedness has been. It may take him months, perhaps years, before he straightens things out, but after everything is cleared, every bill paid, and there are no longer any liabilities, he goes back to New York, presents his account, and hands it all back to the firm. Does he cease to have an interest in it? No, for he is a member of the firm; but the firm takes complete charge and he no longer exercises administration mediatorially. This universe was put under the dominion of Adam. God created him in innocence and put him in charge, and said to him, "I have given you authority over it all." But through his being deceived by Satan, through incompetency and dishonesty, the whole thing was thrown into turmoil. And so our blessed Lord Jesus, one of the Eternal Trinity, is coming back to this world and will take charge of things, and when everything has been subjected to God and all the wicked and utterly impenitent have been dealt with, He will hand it back to the Father that God may be all in all. Shall we lose our Savior then? No, He will remain the same blessed, loving Jesus that He has ever been since His incarnation, but the kingdom will be delivered up to the Father, and God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) will maintain it in righteousness for all eternity.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Death will hold within its grasp all the wicked dead up to the end of the millennium, but God will not permit that condition to last forever. Death will be destroyed. Satan himself will be banished to the lake of fire, and the wicked will share his doom because they refused God's grace. When the Lord Jesus has thus put all things under the feet of God the Father, He Himself voluntarily occupies the place of the Father's

beloved Son and the Servant of the redeemed. He will serve us through all the ages to come, for love delights to wait upon the objects of its affection.

There is a beautiful picture in the Old Testament. We read when a man who had been sold into slavery fulfilled his time, he could go out free. If his master had given him a wife, the wife and children would remain in bondage but he could go free. But if that servant should say, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go free," then they were to put him through a peculiar ceremony. They were to place his ear against the door and pierce it through with an awl, and he would then serve his master forever. What a striking picture that is of the place our blessed Lord Jesus has taken voluntarily in order to be identified with us for eternity! He came into this world as the servant, He took a servant's place, and having completed His service He could have gone back free at any time to the Father's house, but He chose not to do so. There were those down here upon whom His love was set, "Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25), and so we can think of Him saying to the Father, "I love my Master, my bride, my children; I will not go out free." And so He could say, "Mine ear hast thou bored." He bears the mark of eternal subjection because of His love to us. I have often pictured that Hebrew servant sitting in his little cabin home on his master's plantation. Mother is getting the meal and the children are playing about. One little tot climbs up on his knee and says, "Father, what is that ugly hole in your ear? I do not like that." And I think the wife hears it and says, "Oh, my darling, don't speak that way; to me that is the most beautiful thing about your father. We were in bondage and he could have gone out free and left us behind, but he wouldn't do it. He loved me and gave himself for me; he loved you, my dear children, and because of his love for us he chose to remain a perpetual servant. That mark tells of his undying love." So will it be with our blessed Lord Jesus, the subject One for all eternity, and as we look upon those wounds which will never be effaced, we shall say, "There we have the evidence of His unchanging love." What a Savior!

"Man of sorrows," what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we'll sing,
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

We shall be the joy of His heart and He the joy of ours for an eternity of bliss. And mark how everything hangs upon the cross. That is why we delight to look back and remember His suffering there for us. Others may think of His beauty as a lowly Nazarene, or of His glorious transfiguration upon the mount, but to every redeemed soul He looks most beautiful as we think of Him wearing His crown of thorns, bleeding, suffering, dying for us.

BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD

1 Corinthians 15:29–34

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink: for tomorrow we die. Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. (vv. 29–34)

The outstanding expression in this particular portion found nowhere else in Scripture is “baptized for the dead.” Exactly what does it mean? Down through the centuries a number of different interpretations have been suggested. One of the most common among orthodox believers is that we are to understand by the expression, “baptized for the dead,” that we as Christians are baptized for or in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ who died. He died, went down into death, and we have been identified with Him, and in our baptism we confess our death with Him, therefore, “baptized for the dead” really means, “bap-

tized for Christ who died.” Certainly that interpretation is not repugnant to Christian consciences. It is absolutely true that intelligent believers are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, for that, in fact, is the exact meaning of the ordinance of baptism. But is this what is meant here?

In baptism we confess that we were sinners, that we deserved to die, that our Lord Jesus Christ died in our room and stead, and now we are saying, as it were, before the world, before all men, “I take my place with the Christ who died; I desire henceforth to be recognized as one identified with Him in His death, in His burial, and in His resurrection.” Looked at in this way the ordinance is wonderfully precious. I never can understand the state of soul of Christian men who would try in any way to belittle or set aside Christian baptism. I know many precious souls have been brought to Christ simply by witnessing the carrying out of this ordinance. There is something so solemn about it as it definitely sets before us Christ’s death on our behalf and our identification with Him, that it cannot but speak to every one who has ears to hear. So I fully accept that view, but do not believe that it explains the expression in the text, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all.”

Another suggested explanation that has found favor with many is that baptism for the dead means that we ourselves who are baptized confess that we are dead, that we have died with Christ, and that therefore our baptism is one for or of the dead as taking that place, although in this world we no longer belong to the world. We have died, and we bury the dead, and so we are buried because we have died to the old life. Undoubtedly baptism teaches that. We who were once living unto the world, we who were once living to the flesh, have now, in the cross of Christ, died to all that; as having died, the ordinance of baptism speaks of a burial. We are through with the old life. But I do not think that explains the expression in the text.

From the very earliest days there has been another suggested explanation, a rather grotesque one. It has been taken up in our own day and spread abroad as though it were the very gospel of God, by those commonly known as “Latter-day Saints,” or Mormons. Personally, I belong to the Former Day saints, I am not interested in any “Latter-day Saints” movement. It is my joy to be linked with the saints of all ages unto whom Christ Jesus has been made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. But the view held by these Mormons and a few others is that the apostle means that baptism in itself is a saving ordinance, that apart from it none will ever be saved, and since a great many have died without having the opportunity of being baptized, somebody else must be baptized for them if they are going to be saved. And so they say that the apostle

is referring to living Christians being baptized vicariously on behalf of people who have died unbaptized. This is a very common thing among the so-called “Latter-day Saints.” In fact, they have many temples in which they carry out the ceremony of baptism for the dead, and people are urged to be baptized, some over and over and over again, for dead people who were never baptized in this life.

When in Salt Lake City some years ago, a young Mormon elder told me he believed that the members of the Mormon church were saving more souls through being baptized for the dead than Jesus Christ ever saved through dying on Calvary’s cross. He mentioned a very wealthy lady who had come out from the East a good many years ago and had been baptized in Salt Lake City over thirty thousand times. Every time she was baptized she paid a sum of money into the church, so you can see that baptism for the dead is rather a good thing from the financial standpoint. She was using her entire fortune redeeming people from death and destruction through being baptized for the dead! She had been baptized for all the friends and relatives about whom she knew anything at all who had died, and then she had gone into history and literature and sought out thousands of names and had been baptized for every one of them. She had been baptized for Alexander the Great, for Nebuchadnezzar, for Julius Caesar, for Napoleon Bonaparte, for Cleopatra, and thousands of other historical characters, in order that she might be the means of their salvation; and it was concerning this lady especially that this youthful elder said to me with a very solemn face, “I believe in the day of judgment it will be proven that this lady through being baptized for the dead has saved more souls than Jesus Christ!” That blasphemous theory finds no place whatever in the Word of God. In the first place the Word of God never teaches that baptism is essential to salvation. Nowhere in Scripture are we told that if people die unbaptized, they are lost.

It is quite true that it is perfectly right and proper that people who are saved should be baptized, and we find this ordinance linked with faith because it is the confession of the faith that we have. But when Scripture says, for instance, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” it never adds, “He that is not baptized shall be damned,” but, “He that *believeth not* shall be damned.” We have the remarkable example of the first soul ever saved after Christ was nailed to the cross, the thief who hung there beside Him, who was saved that day without any possibility of being baptized. With hands and feet nailed to the tree he could do nothing, he could not carry out any ordinance or do anything by which to earn salvation, but he was saved alone by the finished work of the One who hung on the central cross. And every man who is ever saved will be saved through what Jesus did

when He died on that tree. So we put away the Mormon conception. There is a fourth view which certain Christians have held throughout the centuries, and that is that some of these Corinthians imagined that baptism was essential to salvation and therefore were being baptized vicariously for others who had died in heathenism, and so the apostle refers to it without saying whether it is true or not. But we can be sure that Paul would not refer to it in the way he does without telling them that it was contrary to the mind of God that living people should be baptized for the benefit of dead people.

I have spoken of four suggested interpretations of these words, and I come now to what I believe is the exact meaning of the text. First, let me say that the expression, "Baptized for the dead," means literally in the Greek text, "Baptized in place of, or over, the dead ones, or those who have died." The word *dead* is in the plural, it is not a singular noun; therefore it cannot refer to the Lord Jesus Christ; it is not, "Baptized *because* of Christ." Neither the preposition nor the noun will permit of that interpretation, but the actual rendering would have to be, "Baptized in place of dead ones." It is not, "baptized on behalf, or for the benefit, of dead ones." The preposition does not suggest that. In the earlier part of the chapter the apostle reproves those who denied the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and says, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (v. 17). Everything for a believer depends upon the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was delivered up to death for our offenses, He was raised again for our justification, and if He be not raised, manifestly redemption has never been accomplished, the sin question has never been settled, they who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished, they have found that their profession has gone for nought, for there is no redemption if Christ be not raised, and it naturally follows that if that be the case, we are making a tremendous mistake for, "If the dead be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins," and therefore Christ is powerless to save. Think of the millions of people who have been willing to stake everything for eternity upon this Christ who cannot save if the dead rise not, but if Christ be not risen, they have blundered terribly. We might better go on and enjoy this world, for death ends all if that theory be true.

Verses 20–28 form a parenthesis in which the apostle turns aside from his argument to give us an outline concerning the pageant of the resurrection, and then goes on and develops it. You will find that in verse 29 he picks up the thread of the argument again from verse 19, saying, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most [to be pitied]. . . . Else what shall they do which are baptized [in place of] the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" This may be translated, "What shall they do which

are baptized in the place of the dead ones if no dead ever rise? Why are they then baptized in the place of the dead ones?" Do you not see that the argument is clear and luminous? Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished if Christ has not been raised again, and yet every day other people are being baptized in their places, others are professing faith in Christ, others are availing themselves of the ordinance of baptism, they are filling up the places made vacant on earth by those who have died professing Christ. But if Christ be not risen, then those who have died are lost, they have gained nothing by their profession. Why then should we go on filling up the ranks all down the centuries and putting other people in the place of danger if there is nothing to be gained by it? This is a military figure. A regiment of soldiers goes into battle, and after the battle is over they count the men and find perhaps that seventy-five have been slain. Immediately they begin to recruit others in place of the dead, not to do the dead any good, but to take their places. Seventy-five other men are drawn into that regiment, are recruited in place of the dead, they don the uniform and go forth to take part in other conflicts. But if they are fighting a losing battle, if there is no possibility of ever winning, if they are just wasting their lives, why are they then recruited for the dead? What is the use of their taking the places of those who have died? It is the height of folly if they know there is nothing but certain defeat and destruction awaiting them.

Think of Christian people as a mighty army. Down through the centuries, for nineteen hundred years, the church has been in conflict with the powers of sin and death and hell, and throughout the ages one generation of Christians has fallen and another has taken its place, and the public way of manifesting the fact that they have thus enlisted in the army of the Lord is through baptism. But what a foolish thing if Christ be not risen and if the dead rise not! What are they gaining by being baptized in place of the dead? Would it not have been better to have wound up the history of Christianity in the first centuries and said, "The whole movement is a failure, there is no risen Christ, there is no possibility for salvation here in this life"? A man may accept the philosophy of Christianity and keep it to himself. Possibly his neighbors would never suspect his belief and he would not be subject to martyrdom, but if he really believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he says, "I must make it known," and the right way is through baptism, through confessing Christ in that way as the One who died and rose again. The moment a man was baptized in Paul's day, and many centuries afterward, he put himself in the way of possible martyrdom. His neighbors said, "That man is a Christian." "How do you know?" "He has been baptized, confessing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul was risking his life every hour, for there were

enemies of Christianity on every hand. But if Christ be not risen, why should he, why should I and my fellow laborers stand in the place of jeopardy? Paul says, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." I am putting myself in the place of death every day, I am exposed to death, and I am ready to die for Jesus Christ. Paul knew He had risen for he had seen Him in the glory as He appeared to him that day when he fell stricken on the Damascus road, and Paul became the outstanding defender of Christianity. He says, "I am set for the defence of the gospel," and for the name of Christ he took his life in his hands and died daily.

"If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." What does Paul mean? He is referring to that time when he was almost torn asunder by beast-like men in that riot at Ephesus. He saw that angry mob pressing upon him as they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:28) and he thought of that great throng ready to destroy him, and likened them unto beasts. But, he says, it is all right no matter what they do to me, Christ is real for He is risen again, and I know Him as the risen One and am ready to die for His name's sake. "But what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?" Why should I live like this, why should any Christian give up the world and live a life of self-denial and devotion to the One whom this world has rejected, if the dead rise not? Why not accept the philosophy of the worldling? In Isaiah 22:12-13 God reproves the careless worldlings, "And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die." They did not respond to His call and humble themselves before Him, but went on in the ways of the world. "Eat and drink: for tomorrow we shall die." Here are the words from which the apostle quotes. If Christ has not been raised, if there is no reality in Christianity, then get all the enjoyment out of the world that you can. The worldling says, "Let's have a good time while we live, for we are going to be a long time dead." If death ends everything, why not go on and get what you can out of this life? But there is a better world beyond the grave, there is a Savior who died to put away our sins and who lives triumphant in glory waiting to receive to Himself those who trust Him. So we say, "You can have your feasts, your fame, your frivolity, your wealth, Christ is more to me than all of these." The Christian, you see, is a man who has heard the drumbeat of another country and so does not keep step with the drumbeat of this world.

“Be not deceived,” says the apostle, “evil communications corrupt good manners.” People say, “It does not make any difference whether Jesus died and rose; we can be just as good without this assurance.” But when they deny the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, you find that they will throw the reins upon their lusts and live for the world and please themselves. So to us the word comes home, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not.” You are linked with a risen Christ and you are in this world to glorify Him. Let that risen One control your heart and life, and yours will be a holy life devoted to the glory of God. “Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”

A number of years ago I was at the burial of an aged saint. For a great many years he had been a bright witness for Christ in the part of the city where he lived and had brought up his family in the fear of God. One of his children was a missionary in the Philippine Islands. He had grandchildren who attended the church services, but had not as yet confessed the Lord. As I closed the funeral service and we were about to take our last look at that face until the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering unto Him, I felt led to step to the casket and say, “Just wait a minute before we take our farewell look at the face of our beloved brother. He has been a witness for Christ in this city for many years, his place will not easily be filled, he will be greatly missed by Christians. I wonder whether anyone at this funeral service would like by the grace of God to seek to prepare to take his place. Is there anybody here who has heard the voice of God speaking to you and perhaps you have never yet come to Christ, but right here you will close with the Lord, you will take Him as your Savior and be ready to be baptized for the dead? This one has gone, there is a vacant place in the ranks; will you take his place?” I waited a moment, and then a fine, tall, young man, his grandson, arose from his seat and came forward. He faced the audience and said, “Today I accept my grandfather’s Savior, and I want you to pray that I may be able in some measure to take his place”; and then he knelt at that casket and gave himself to the Lord, and the next Sunday night I baptized him for the dead. It is simply the filling up of the ranks, taking the places of those who have gone before. Christian baptism always emphasizes that it is a public testimony, a testimony that one has turned from the world, trusted Christ, and will now seek to live for His glory. And so one generation has been baptized for the dead of the past generation, and that one for the past, and so on, clear back to the very beginning of Christianity.

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED UP?

1 Corinthians 15:35–50

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first

which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (vv. 35–50)

We have come in our study to the latter part of this great chapter. Having settled the question of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle takes up another problem that has perplexed and exercised the minds of many. If there is to be a resurrection of the dead, in what body will they arise? In answering this he gives us a special divine revelation, and we should remember that apart from revelation this is a matter of which we can know nothing. We are just as ignorant today of what comes after death as those philosophers were five hundred years before Christ whose discussions and dialogues on life, death, and immortality have been embalmed for us in the dialogues of Plato. Men still read of Socrates, Glauca, Plato, Aristotle, and all the rest of them, and know no more today than they did then, for if God has not spoken all is mere speculation at the best. But He has spoken, He has given us His sure Word, and we may have the certainty of the knowledge that, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Let us hear then what God Himself, the Creator of all, the God of the resurrection, has to say on this subject.

In the eighth chapter of Romans the apostle Paul comes to the close of his wonderful exposition of our threefold salvation: salvation from the guilt of sin, salvation from the power of sin, and salvation from the presence of sin; and he looks on to the time when we who believe shall receive the redemption of the body. We have already received the redemption of our souls, we are already saved from the guilt of sin and the judgment due to sin, but we are still in poor failing human bodies. Christians get sick just as other people do, and Christians die just as other folk die. Every little while somebody rises up with a new gospel to tell us that we may have the redemption of the body in this life, and that no Christian need ever be sick if we will just claim the Lord as our healer. But no matter how fervently they believe it, no matter how faithfully they teach it, they all take cold if they sit in a draft, they all get indigestion when they eat things that do not agree with them, they all get sick and die eventually, unless they get run over by an automobile and die by accident. They are just as truly subject to

sickness and death as other people are. All the great faith healers of the past are dead, and all of those of the present will die soon unless the Lord Jesus should come in our lifetime and we should be changed and caught up to meet Him without passing through death. Those under the Adamic sentence all die. But, thank God, there is redemption for the body. The hour is coming when our Lord Jesus Christ shall return from heaven and shall transform these bodies of our humiliation and make them like unto the body of His glory. And this is just as true of the decayed bodies of those who have died as it is of those who are living when our blessed Savior returns. But this at once presents a difficulty.

The natural mind says, "I can understand how He can touch this mortal body of mine and quicken it into immortality if I should be living when He returns, but if I should die before He comes, and my body go back to the dust from which it came, and that dust be scattered to the four winds of the heavens, I cannot understand how it could be raised again. I may have a body in resurrection, but it will surely be another body; I shall not actually be raised from the dead." Scripture answers that objection in the passage we have just read, "Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" In other words, in what way are they brought from the tomb, and what kind of a body will they have in the resurrection? The apostle says, Take a lesson from nature, "thou simple one." The word *fool* here is rather strong; he is not insulting his readers by calling them fools in the sense in which we use the word, but the Greek word means, "unthinking one." If you would only stop to think, you would realize that there are many analogies in nature to the resurrection. We can think of some apart from these given in Scripture. Take the caterpillar crawling along the leaves. Suddenly a strange alteration comes over it and it spins a cocoon around itself. Its whole appearance is changed and it dies to its old life altogether. It stays in that cocoon a while and eventually it emerges, and out comes, not a caterpillar but a beautiful butterfly, a lovely creature which is able to soar up into the air, and no longer crawls upon the ground, the grass or the leaves. It is a wonderful picture of what the resurrection may be.

The apostle uses the illustration of a farmer sowing grain. He sows it, to use the words that are so often used at funeral services, "in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection." The bare grain is sown by the farmer who believes that when it falls in the ground and seems to rot away that will not be the end of it. It will come forth into a fuller life than it has known before. But when the resurrection of that grain takes place, he does not see grain such as he has sown coming up from the ground; he first sees a blade of green, and by-and-by quite a stalk arises and then a head of wheat, oats or barley. "Thou [simple one], that

which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." There is no mistake made. If wheat is sown, it is wheat that rises from that grain; if he sows oats then oats will rise; if barley is sown, barley arises from that grain. There is absolute identity and yet a wonderful change. That beautiful head of grain is much more lovely to look upon than the simple little seed that went into the ground. And so with the resurrection body; there will be absolute identification in some way to the body that died. How much of that grain is in the seed of wheat? Get down to the root of the wheat stalk and you will still find the little shell out of which this stalk has come. Just so will it be in the resurrection. God will not have to use every part of this body. I do not possess today a particle of the body that I had a few years ago. When I was a boy in school, they said that the body changes every seven years. Now they say it changes every three years. I am not conscious of that change except, of course, that I know that my nails and hair grow and have to be cut. In just the same way my entire body is changing continually. There is not a bit of this body today that I had three-and-a-half years ago, and yet I know that I am I. I say to you, "You are looking so much better than you were when I last saw you," or maybe you are looking a little worse; and you do not say, "Well, that is because you never saw me before if you haven't seen me for three-and-a-half years." No, you are the same person, and the body is your body, and you know it is, and yet there is not a cell in it that was there three-and-a-half years ago. And so we say that there is identity but not necessarily the using of the entire body that is put into the grave when the Lord raises us in resurrection.

The next thing the apostle stresses is that there are different kinds of flesh. We do not understand the differences, and yet we know that they are there, and that we never pass from one to another.

"There is one kind of flesh of men." Men are made to live upon the earth, and that is the only way they are comfortable. There is another kind of flesh, that of beasts, and they can live even in the earth. Think, for instance, of the bear or the raccoon, who as winter approaches go into a burrow or a hollow tree and become dormant for the period of several months until spring comes again, and then they emerge. That would be impossible for a man, but it is not for beasts. The beast is adapted to this environment; its body is different to that of a human being.

And there is another flesh, that of fish, and it is adapted to an environment that neither beasts nor men can live in. They may enter into that kind of

environment for a limited period, but would drown if they had to be kept under water continually. The fish is at home there; he is so constituted by God that when he is taken out of the water, he dies. One of the great German writers has well said, "If fish are philosophers, if they are capable of thinking, I am absolutely certain that every philosophical fish is quite sure that it is impossible for any creature to live out of water." It knows that when drawn out of the water it finds itself gasping and will soon die.

Then there is the flesh of birds, and the bird is suited to fly in the air, differing altogether from mankind or beasts or fish. And so, if there are differences here on earth, why need you wonder about the difference between bodies suited to heaven and bodies suited to this lower scene?

"There are also celestial bodies," that is, heavenly bodies, "and bodies terrestrial," earthly bodies. Our Lord Jesus came into this world and took a terrestrial body, but after having made satisfaction for our sins on the cross, He came forth in resurrection in a celestial body, and in that body He ascended through the heavens into the very presence of God where "he ever liveth to make intercession" for us. His celestial body is the pattern of what ours shall be; we shall have bodies in resurrection that are not subject to the laws that control us now. When we turn to Scripture and hear our blessed Lord talking with the Sadducees who denied that there was any resurrection, we get a little better understanding of this. They came and said, "Here was a woman who had a husband, and he died, and the brother of that man married the woman, and he died, and there were no children. Then another brother married her, and this went on until she had been married seven times, and they had all died. Last of all the woman died also. Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?" They thought they had put a puzzling question. But the Lord Jesus simply said, "You do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. They that are accounted worthy to attain to that age (that is, the coming glorious age of the kingdom and the resurrection) neither marry, nor are given in marriage . . . for they are like unto the angels, being children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:27-36). The angels are sexless. They do not propagate their kind. Each is an individual creation; and believers, in the resurrection, will be like unto the angels. That means that in resurrection we are not going to be men and women as we are now, but we will simply be redeemed people with no sex distinctions whatsoever, because the day will have gone by when the human race is to be propagated as now.

Then again in this epistle where the apostle is reproving believers for making a great fuss about questions of foods, some that are clean and some that are unclean, he says, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall

destroy both it and them” (6:13). What is he telling us here? As long as we are in this world, our bodies have to be nourished by food, and so this body has a digestive tract by means of which we are able to take from our food those elements that repair the waste, and build up our physical constitutions. But in the resurrection that will not be so, and therefore the whole digestive tract as we now know it, is to be destroyed. It is not that you will not be able to eat, for Jesus took a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb after His resurrection, but it was not necessary that there should be any digestive tract to dispose of it. We shall have bodies that are unchanging. All the changes of time will have come to an end and our bodies will be like to the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But even when we have our celestial bodies there will be differences in the glories that we shall enjoy. So the apostle turns to contemplate the material celestial orbs, the sun, the moon, and the stars. Notice how they differ in glory. “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.” We read elsewhere, “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). And when we get our resurrected bodies, they will be bodies of light like that body in which our blessed Lord was manifested on the Mount of Transfiguration, and as Saul of Tarsus saw Him when he said, “I saw . . . a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun” (Acts 26:13).

In that day there will be differences in glory according to the measure of our devotedness to Christ down here, for he says, “So also is the resurrection of the dead.” We are all saved by the same grace and through that same grace we will be raised and changed at the coming of the Lord. But we will not all be rewarded in the same way, for reward is for faithful service, and I am afraid many of us are going to lose a great deal at the judgment seat of Christ because we have not been more true and real in all our ways down here. The day is soon coming when you and I would give worlds, if we possessed them, if we had only let God have His way absolutely in our lives. The greatest joy, the greatest blessing that can come into any life is wholehearted surrender to the will of God, no matter what it may seem to mean, no matter how difficult it may seem at the time. The things that many of us have dreaded are the things that brought us the greatest blessing as we have sought to walk with our gracious God and Father. In that day when the Lord looks over our lives, when He goes over everything with us, when He says, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” how we shall rejoice to have His approbation, and how we shall wish that we had been more devoted. There is not one soul with Christ today who looks back on his earthly life and says, “I wish I had not been quite

so out-and-out for God; I wish I had been less self-denying; I wish I had been more concerned about my own comforts." But I fancy there are many who say, "If I had my life to live over again, no matter what suffering, what rendings of the heartstrings it might mean, I would never hesitate a moment to let God have His will in everything in my life." It is not a question of whether or not we get to heaven. All who are saved by grace will be there, but there will be a difference in our rewards.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Observe the impersonal pronoun all through these verses. Thus you will see there is identification between the bodies that die and the bodies that rise, and yet there are differences in appearance. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. Could you have identification brought out more clearly than that? The body that is sown is the one that is raised, and yet it is changed. It will be incorruptible. Death occurs only a few hours before corruption begins; but the new body will be incorruptible; it will be a glorified body. Just what that means may be seen from what the disciples beheld on the Mount of Transfiguration. They saw the blessed Lord Jesus shining in that glory and they beheld Moses and Elijah, we read, in the same glory with Jesus. Moses, a man who had died, and yet was there in the glorified body. Elijah, a man caught up to heaven without dying, and he was in the glorified body.

And then we read that "It is raised in power." How weak this poor body is! The spirit often is willing, but the flesh is weak. We find ourselves hindered by the body, but the day is coming when instead of being a hindrance to the spirit the body will be like wings to that spirit, and we will be able to go to the uttermost parts of the universe on the business of the Lord easier than we could cross the street today.

"It is raised a spiritual body." Do not misunderstand that. A spiritual body is not a body made of spirit. God is a Spirit and is not said to have a body. He took a body when the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—or, "in a body" (Col. 2:9). You and I are spirits each dwelling in a body.

But I am not all spirit; I am also soul. "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23). The soul is the seat of my emotional nature, the seat of all my natural instincts; as a man, it is my human self; but the spirit is the highest part of my nature to which God can make Himself known. "The Spirit itself beareth

witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). As a Christian I ought to be constantly under the control of the spirit, I ought to live according to the highest part of my nature; but every little while I find that instead of being controlled by the spirit part of me, I am controlled by my soul, and I am more or less a creature of emotions. I am easily influenced this way or that emotionally, and often to my detriment and that of others. And this is called here "the natural body." The word translated "natural" is simply the Greek adjective from the word *soul*, that is, a *soulish* body. This body is the suited vehicle for the expression of the emotions of my soul. The spirit is often willing to do certain things but the flesh is weak. The body being a soulish body is a hindrance to the spirit. But in resurrection I shall have a body that is spiritual, that is, a body suited to and dominated by the spirit. There will be nothing then to hinder the full expression of the spirit, and I shall be absolutely subject to God who is a Spirit.

And so it is written, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Adam was the head of the old creation; God formed him out of the dust of the ground. If you do not believe that, wait a while, and your body will go back to the dust and prove that Scripture is right. God breathed into this man Adam, and he became a living soul and he is the progenitor of the race. But the Last Adam is our Lord Jesus. He is the risen One and so has become a quickening Spirit. He breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit," and we are linked with Him. He is the Last Adam, the Lord from heaven, and we are going to have bodies like He now has. As linked with Adam I have a body like his, but in resurrection I shall have a body like that of the blessed Lord Himself.

"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." The first man was of the dust, dusty—or of the dirt, dirty. That is what man is by his relationship with Adam. The Second Man is the Lord from heaven, our blessed glorified Savior. The very word *Adam* means "red clay." "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." As we have borne the image of the earthy, and as we have looked like our first father, and had the appearance of the natural man in this world, so we shall bear the image of the Savior. I think this helps to explain a passage which has bewildered people: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

A lady said to me one day, "If we are all going to be like Him we will all look

alike, and how are we ever going to know each other?" That is not what it says. We have borne the image of the earthy; we are like Adam, but we do not all look the same. The wonder of it is that if it were possible for the one billion eight hundred million men and women of the world to pass before you, you would never find two that are exactly alike. Sometimes we find two people so nearly alike that we can hardly tell them apart, but there is always some little difference. The infinite variety in creation is amazing when you think that there is so little to work with: only one nose, one mouth, two ears, two eyes, one chin, two cheeks, and one forehead! And yet the Creator has made over one billion eight hundred million different specimens in each generation, and each generation diverse from every other. I do not know much about music, but I am always dumbfounded when I think how much can be made from seven tones. I cannot understand it. I should have thought all the music would have been written years ago, and that nobody could by any possibility make up another air. But there are symphonies that can be written that men have never dreamed of. So with the human family, there is infinite variety and yet we are all like the first man Adam.

And now in the resurrection body there will be infinite variety too, and yet all shall be like Him in that we shall have incorruptible bodies and yet every one different. We shall know each other yonder as we have never known each other down here. What a wonderful hope is this that Scripture puts before believers!

LECTURE 37

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS

1 Corinthians 15:51–58

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (vv. 51–58)

With these words the apostle Paul brings to a close his great treatise on the resurrection, first dealing with that of Christ and then with that of the saints. In this particular section he shows us that while all will have part in

the glorious event at the resurrection of the saints, yet some will not pass through death, but will be changed instead of being raised. We noticed in the closing verses of the previous portion the statement that, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God refers, of course, to that future reign when the authority of God will be manifested in heaven and over all the earth. The kingdom of God will consist of two spheres. Our Lord Jesus says, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). Those are the heavenly saints in the kingdom day. Then we also read of people brought into this blessing here on earth during the kingdom. They, of course, will be in bodies of flesh and blood. The apostle is here considering the heavenly side of the kingdom when he says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." As we have remarked before, those that are "accounted worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: but are as the angels of God in heaven" because they are the children of the resurrection. That will be the heavenly aspect of the kingdom. Observe, the apostle does not say, "Neither flesh *nor* blood," but says, "Flesh *and* blood." That is, our bodies in their present condition as sustained by blood are not suited for heaven, for the coming glorious kingdom, and therefore we must be changed. How will this change take place?

"Behold, I show you a mystery." We have often pointed out that a mystery in the New Testament is not something mysterious and difficult to understand. The Greek word is almost anglicized here, and does not mean something strange and hard to comprehend, but a mystery is something revealed only to the initiated. Some of you have been initiated into some secret society, and have not discovered anything very mysterious, but you have found that there are certain things on the inside that folk like myself on the outside do not know anything about. That is the real use of the word here. It is a secret not known to the generality of the people, but made known to the initiated, and all God's beloved people are looked upon by Him as His initiated ones. The only lodge I have ever joined is "The Grand Army of the Redeemed." I was initiated into that by being born again, and then the Holy Spirit conducted me from chair to chair and revealed the mysteries as you have them here in the Word of God.

There are a number of these sacred secrets which were kept from the people of God in past dispensations, but are made known now in the glorious dispensation of the Holy Spirit. One of them is this mystery of the first resurrection and the rapture of the living saints. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." This is a very remarkable statement. We often hear it said that, "There is nothing more certain than death and taxes." Taxes seem to be

quite certain, but I am glad to say that death is not absolutely certain for the Christian. "Well," someone says, "doesn't the Word say, 'It is appointed unto man once to die'?" That is the divine appointment for man as such, but there will be a generation of God's redeemed people who will be exempt from that. "We shall not all sleep." He uses the word *sleep* in place of *die*, for death to the believer is the putting of the tired, weary, worn body to sleep until the Lord Jesus comes to waken it again. It is only the body that sleeps. The real man, the spirit and soul, is absent from the body and present with the Lord, taken home to be with Christ, which is far better, so that the bodies of our friends in Christ who have died are sleeping, but they themselves are with Christ, wonderfully happy in His presence. The apostle Paul gives us an idea of their state and condition when he speaks of being "caught up to the third heaven." That is the immediate dwelling place of God. The first heaven is the atmospheric heaven, the second is the stellar or the starry heaven, and the third is God's dwelling place.

The apostle had the experience of being caught up into the third heaven, and he was so enraptured that he could not tell whether he was in the body or out of the body. That teaches us several things. First, if Paul was in the body, his body was no clog upon him, and when we are in the presence of the Lord in the body our bodies will be no hindrance to us as they often are now. But if Paul was taken out of the body, then he did not miss his body. He was just as conscious out of as he could be in it. Some say that it is impossible to live out of the body, but it is no more impossible than it is for the works of a watch to go on running without the case. The body dies, it is put to sleep, but the believer lives on, "Absent from the body, . . . present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). In the first resurrection the body is raised in glory, and the spirit comes to dwell in the body again. That is the state of the believer when Christ calls us forth from the tomb.

How many have questioned these words, "We shall not all sleep." It is a remarkable fact that in the Douay Version, which is read by a large section of the professed church of Christ, this passage reads, "We shall all rise again, but we shall not all be changed." How it ever got into the text perplexes people, but that is exactly what is written in the Vatican manuscript. But older ones read like the translation we have here, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." The manuscript of the fourth century, from which the Douay Version was translated, shows how unbelievers had already come in; some scribe tampered with the text, and if it were not that we have older manuscripts giving it as here we might be perplexed about it. But "we shall not all sleep," and there may be some of us in this generation who will be living when our Lord Jesus Christ **returns**. But whether living or dead we shall all be changed.

Every one of us must undergo the glorious change in order to have part in the heavenly side of the kingdom, and that shall take place instantly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. I cannot think of anything much faster than that. It does not say, "In the *winking* of an eye," but "in the *twinkling* of an eye." As quickly as a gleam of light shines in the eye, so quickly shall we be changed at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have often tried to think of what that would mean. There are dear children of God lying on hospital beds, weak and suffering, enduring days of pain and nights of anguish, and they are crying in the distress of their souls, "O Lord, how long?" One moment enduring excruciating pain, and the next rising to meet the Lord in the air in a body that can never suffer again. Then there are some of God's people whose minds have failed because of the stress of things, perhaps shut away in some sanitarium, possibly melancholy and in gloom, maybe imagining that God has forsaken them and that there is no hope for them. The poor brain has given way completely, and yet the next moment with intelligence such as the angels have, as they find themselves in their glorified bodies looking into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a marvelous hope it is! No wonder the apostle calls it this "blessed hope." "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

When will that be? "At the last trump." How may we understand that? There are those who have attempted to link this trump with the trumpet of the seventh angel in Revelation. In that book you have a series of seven trumpets, and when they are blown, various judgments are poured out upon the earth, and when the seventh is blown, the kingdom of God is ushered in. Some have thought the apostle is referring to that trumpet, thus indicating that the church of God would be here on earth going through all the tribulation and distress, only to be saved out of it when the seventh trumpet is blown. But the book of Revelation was not written until approximately thirty years after the writing of this epistle, so that there is no possible way by which there could be a connection between these trumpets. And when we turn to 1 Thessalonians we find that this trumpet is called, "The trump of God" (4:16). It is not the trumpet of an angel. Why is the trump of God here called "the last trump?" That expression was very familiar to the people who lived in Paul's day. It was in common use in connection with the Roman army.

When a Roman camp was about to be broken up, whether in the middle of the night or in the day, a trumpet was sounded. The first blast meant, "Strike tents and prepare to depart." The second meant, "Fall into line," and when what was called "the last trump" sounded it meant, "March away." The apostle uses that figure, and says that when the last trump of this age of grace sounds, then

we shall be called away to be forever with the Lord. We have heard the first. Many of you remember when you were just part and parcel of the world, you were living with the world and like the world, and you were settling down here, but you heard the gospel trumpet awakening you out of your sleep. And then I trust you have heard the second trumpet calling you to take your places in fellowship with God's beloved people as soldiers in this scene. And now what wait we for? For the last trump, when we shall be summoned, not to march away nor yet to fly away, but when we "shall be caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). When will it take place? It is an undated event in the ways of God with men. It may take place today, it may be tonight; but whether at midnight or in the morning or in the daytime it will make no difference to us for we have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible." I do not need to dwell on that.

"And we [who are living] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." You will notice that you have the two groups. "This corruptible"—that refers to the dead—"must put on incorruption." The dead whose bodies have corrupted away will be raised in incorruptible bodies. But the living, "this mortal," those that are alive but subject to death if time goes on, "shall put on immortality." This is the promise that we have in Romans 8:10, where we read, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead." A little word is omitted there which may be added to make it more clear. "The body is *[still]* dead because of sin." You may be a believer, but your body is still under the Adamic sentence, "Dying thou shalt die." But the spirit is alive and is the pledge of the new life yet to be. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11). I know that some have taught that the indwelling Spirit gives new life to the mortal body right here and now. But that is what the apostle denies in the tenth verse, "If Christ be in you, the body is *[still]* dead because of sin." But if the Spirit—the Spirit of life—dwells in you, someday He shall quicken into newness of life your mortal body by the Spirit that dwelleth within you. When will that be? At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him.

Then we read, "This mortal must put on immortality." Notice the terms *mortal* and *immortal*. These refer to the body; never to the spirit or soul. The everlasting existence of man is taught in Scripture, but immortality is a blessing that will be revealed when our Lord comes.

"When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,



Death is swallowed up in victory.” And now he goes back and quotes from the book of the prophet Hosea, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (13:14). Death comes in and takes from us our nearest and dearest, and our hearts are pained because of the separation. But if we know Christ, and if our loved ones were in Christ, the sting of death is gone, and we are looking on to a glorious reunion when Jesus comes again. What a wonderful event it will be when saints who have been separated here on earth will recognize one another as we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then we can sing, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” That which makes death terrible to the unsaved is sin—“The sting of death is sin”—but if we know that sin has been put away, that sin has been purged by the precious atoning blood of Christ, then that sting of death is gone.

“The strength of sin is the law.” Do you believe that? I wonder whether some of you have not thought that the law is the strength of holiness. You have imagined that the way to be holy was to be under the law, and you have tried to obtain sanctification by keeping the law. It says here, “The strength of sin is the law,” not, “The strength of holiness is the law.” What does he mean? The law simply stirs up everything in the human heart that is opposed to God, and instead of producing holiness the result is greater transgression. That is what the apostle puts before the Galatians and the Romans. The law never produces holiness. It is the heart occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ that produces holiness. When you have seen that the law condemns, but that Christ has borne the condemnation for you, then you can look away to Him, and as you are occupied with Him you will be a holy man or woman. You cannot make yourself holy by rules and regulations. Not even God’s law given at Sinai has the ability to make men holy, but the living glorified Christ can change people into His image as they are taken up with Him, so that they become holy.

Paul concludes this section by saying, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Death may seem for the moment to triumph. It looked like triumph when death came into your home. I felt it was a triumph of death when it came years ago into our home and took one after another whom I loved most tenderly, but as I look on to the glorious future and realize that death is to be swallowed up in victory at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, I can already claim by faith that conquest over it and exclaim, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” So the verse with which the section closes comes home to every one of us, “Therefore”—because these things are true—“my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your

labour is not in vain in the Lord.” They tell me that occupation with these precious truths that have to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ may have a tendency to make people heady and theoretical, and no longer useful in the church of God here on earth, but I do not know anything that should so grip the soul and put one to work for God as the knowledge of the truth we have just been considering.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

1 Corinthians 16:1–12

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but

his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time. (vv. 1–12)

Many have wondered why such a seemingly prosaic portion of Holy Scripture as this should be preserved for us down through the ages, and have asked what special spiritual help it gives, what lesson it has for the people of God since the days when the apostle wrote it. We can quite understand that there were certain personal things that would be of interest to the Corinthians, but what difference would it make to us whether this portion of Scripture should be lost or not? It is just these personal touches in the letters of the apostle Paul and other apostolic writers that prove that these epistles are not forgeries. Any one trying to write a forged letter to pass off upon people as the Word of God would certainly leave out just such details as we have here, but these are things that come bubbling up from the warm heart of the actual writer of the letter who was in touch with all these people to whom and of whom he speaks. I want to note briefly several things in connection with the persons mentioned, before dwelling more at length on the topic of this address.

The Christianity of Paul was a very practical thing. One occasion for the writing of the first part of this chapter was that there had been a prolonged famine in the land of Palestine and in other parts of Syria, as a result of which many of the Jewish believers were suffering greatly. The apostle, moving around among the Gentile Christians in Europe, where conditions were very different, laid the responsibility upon them of ministering to the needs of their Hebrew brethren in Christ. That is something that Christians have sought to imitate all down through the centuries since. It is a most practical way of showing the unity of the church of Christ and of manifesting the compassion of our Lord toward those in need. It is this that was pressed so earnestly upon the Corinthian church—their responsibility to help their Jewish brethren. They could not say, “Oh, well, these folks in another land are not intimately related to us. If they have not been provident enough to lay aside during the years of plenty, why should we share our possessions with them?”

Christianity demands that we recognize the fact that we are members one of another, and if one member suffers all the members suffer. In fact it is more than that: Christianity demands that we show deep interest even in men and women of the world who are not one with us in Christ, for we are told, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). And this has characterized the true church of God wherever there has been a cry of need. When nations, peoples or

cities are in distress, Christian people are the first to put their hands into their pockets and share with those who are in need. I wish that those who spurn the church, those who ridicule the message of the gospel, would bear this in mind. I wonder, if it depended upon utter unbelievers, how much interest would have been taken in past years in famine refugees in India, in China, or in those who suffered as a result of the World War in Europe and elsewhere. The Red Cross is first of all a product of Christianity. That red cross is the blood-stained cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is these practical ministries that show that believers have the same love that animated our Savior when He came from heaven to give Himself for a lost world. So Christians are to look out for those in need and seek to make things easier for them.

The apostle is very careful that everything should be done in a manner that would commend itself to the consciences of others. He never went out on his own responsibility accumulating large sums of money, supposedly for the poor, without being accountable to any one, lest he might have been laid open to suspicion, and people might have said, "He uses this to feather his own nest." No, it is as though he says, "I do not want to be responsible for your money: I want you to make your offerings in my absence." "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." He wished nothing to do with it, but allowed them to appoint the men that they trusted to take charge of this fund and carry it to Jerusalem. He told them that, if they wished, he would go with them, but he would not take the responsibility of handling the funds. That is a very good principle. Many a professed servant of Christ has gotten into difficulty through soliciting and obtaining money for which he gave no proper accounting. We can all take a leaf out of Paul's book when it comes to handling funds.

He was laying out his work for the coming season, for he was not one to trust to haphazard openings. He was coming to the Corinthians when he passed through Macedonia and he said that he might winter with them. First he would visit Ephesus, and then later he was going to Jerusalem, and he was anxious to be there by the Feast of Pentecost, the time when years before the Holy Spirit descended and the church was formed. He wanted to be there on that specific occasion for it would give him a remarkable opportunity of reaching the thousands of Jews who would come up from all over the world to keep the feast, and he would be enabled to meet them and to present the gospel to them. Then too, many Christians would be there with whom he could have happy fellowship.

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." God had opened a door for the testimony, and of course there were those

that opposed him. No servant of God who is in the current of the divine will ever have to hunt for open doors for testimony. He simply needs to be obedient to the Lord. The trouble is we are not all willing to let the Lord guide us. He has told us that it is “He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Rev. 3:7). The business of the servant of Christ is to be in His will and say, “Here, Lord, I am at Thy bidding. Open doors or close them as Thou wilt. If Thou wilt have me go, I will go; if Thou wilt have me refrain from going, I am under Thy command and Thy control.” If the Lord opens the door, never mind the adversary. “A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.” The adversaries did not frighten Paul. He went forward, “Strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10), knowing that, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Then in verse 10 notice his kindly interest in his younger fellow servants: “Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.” This is our friend, Timothy, and I take it that he was a bit troubled with what our psychologists call an inferiority complex. He was not constantly shoving himself forward; he rather underrated than overrated his ability, and Paul realized that because he was so humble and lowly there were some who might belittle him and set him to one side. Paul says, “He is my companion in the gospel; he does the same kind of work that I am doing, so help him forward.”

And then I think there is something to be learned from the way he speaks of Apollos. “As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.” Some folk have an idea that the apostles were the first bishops of the church, that they had all authority in their spheres, and that the apostle Paul was an archbishop of western Asia and eastern Europe. If that were the case, he could command the other brethren to go as he directed. He would have said to Timothy, “You go here,” and to Apollos, “You go yonder,” and they would have gone. But there is nothing like that here. Paul did not occupy any such place; he did not lord it over other servants of Christ. He was himself a servant subject to the Lord Jesus and recognized that the others were in exactly the same position. He would say a good word for Timothy, but he would not command him. Here he suggests to Apollos that it might be well to go to Corinth and minister to the brethren there; he had been there before and they had been greatly benefited by his ministry. But Apollos said, “I do not have any leading of the Lord to go there; at some later day I may.” And Paul says, “Very well, it is not for me to tell you where to go; you are the Lord’s servant.”

All these things help us to understand the conditions that prevailed in the early church. There was no great hierarchy lording it over the rest, but just the various local assemblies of believers and the servants of Christ, as gifted by the Lord, acting as subject to Him. I would not like to tear this chapter out of my Bible. It helps me to understand God's way of guiding His servants in their ministry for Him.

We come back now to that which he especially wants to stress, "Concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." I want to trace out with you the place that the first day of the week had in the early Christian church, and that which it should have in the church of God today. Let us turn back to the Old Testament to Leviticus 23. There we have the seven great outstanding Hebrew festivals, the feasts of the Lord, the different occasions on which the people of Israel came together in a special way, beginning with the Passover and finishing with the Feast of Tabernacles. In Leviticus 23:10-11 we read: "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it." When was the Sabbath? The third verse says, "Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings." The Sabbath then was the seventh day. The Feast of Firstfruits took place on "the morrow after the sabbath," which was the first day of the week. And what was this Feast of Firstfruits? It was the feast that immediately followed the Passover.

What was the Passover? We have had its typical significance in the fifth chapter of our epistle. The apostle says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (5:7-8). The Passover was the recurring memorial feast of the death of the lamb, the shedding of the blood, and the sprinkling of the blood upon the doorposts and the lintels in Egypt, by which the people were delivered from judgment. For God had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. 12:13). The Passover speaks of the death of Christ.

Following the Passover you have the sheaf of firstfruits presented before the Lord. Of what does it speak? It tells of grain that has fallen into the ground in death, but has come forth in new life. Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall

into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). He was the corn of wheat who fell into the ground in death; He has come up in resurrection. The Feast of Firstfruits speaks of this. The apostle has already explained it for us in 15:23: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." On the first day of the week the sheaf of firstfruits was presented before the Lord, and this is a type of the resurrection of Christ. In the last chapter of Matthew's gospel, verse 1, we read, "In the end of the Sabbath"—the word is plural and should be translated "Sabbaths"—"as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." And what had happened? The blessed Lord had risen in power on that first day of the week, that morning after the Sabbath, and from that time on the first day of the week had a very special place in the thoughts and in the hearts and minds of followers of our Lord Jesus.

Psalm 118 prophetically sets forth the rejection of Christ and then His resurrection. We read there in verse 22: "The stone which the builders refused"—that is, His rejection, His crucifixion—"is become the head of the corner"—that is His resurrection. That was what made Him the Head of the corner. "This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Ps. 118:23). Men crucified Him; God raised Him from the dead, and made Him the Head of the corner.

The psalm continues, "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." What day? The day when Christ was made the Head of the corner. It was the day of His glorious resurrection, the day of the presentation of the firstfruits, the first day of the week. You see what an honored place the first day of the week has in God's Word.

Then going back once more to Leviticus 23, we read in verses 15–16: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD." This would be another first day of the week. What was this feast? It was Pentecost. And now, on the morrow, after the seventh sabbath following the Passover, which typified the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, while the disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2–4).

The day of Pentecost had fully come, and the Lord received to Himself a new meal offering in those that had been redeemed by His precious blood. It was on the first day of the week that the Holy Spirit came from heaven to baptize believers into one body, and so, from this time on, the first day of the week has always had its special place in the church of God.

In Acts 20 we read of Paul coming to Troas and remaining there a week with the brethren. In verse 7 we read: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." It does not say that on the first day of the week the disciples came together to hear Paul preach, but it says, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." That is what they were accustomed to do on that day. They came together to participate in what we call the Communion service, to take part in the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup which speaks of the precious body of our Lord Jesus given up to death and of His blood poured out for our redemption. And when they thus came together that night they found they had a wonderful visitor ready to minister the Word to them. Many of them were slaves and had to work during the day, and so they came together at night. Paul participated with them in the meeting and preached the Word to them, and the service went on until midnight.

When you go back to the earliest records which have come down from those whom we call "the apostolic fathers," those who wrote shortly after the New Testament was completed, we learn it was the custom of the believers to gather together on the first day of the week for worship and for the ministry of the Word, and, above all, to partake of what they called the Eucharist, the Thanksgiving. They thought of the Lord's Supper as the Feast of Thanksgiving, when Christians came together to give thanks to the Lord Jesus for the suffering and sorrow that He went through for our redemption. One of these early fathers has written something like this: "Upon the first day of the week, the day that we Christians call the Lord's Day, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, we come together to break bread," etc. There have been those who have tried to tell us that we are all wrong in recognizing the first day of the week as a special day for worship and praise, that we should Judaize and go back to the law of Moses for our special day. But all that has been set aside in the old economy, for in the new dispensation we find God gives special honor to this new day, the first day of the week. On this day they came together to break bread. The Holy Spirit descended on this day, Christ arose from the dead on this day, and on this day they made their offerings for the work of the Lord.

The apostle tells them to lay aside at home as God hath prospered them, so that when they come together they may give to the Lord. They were to go over what they had received during the week, and see how God had blessed them, and give the Lord a part. Of course I take it that no Christian would give less than a Jew did, and he gave a tenth to God. So God would have a tenth at least, and more if they could afford it. When they came together to break bread they gave their offering to meet the needs of the Lord's work, and to care for the needy.

Yes, we can thank God for preserving to us, all down through the centuries, the privilege of gathering together on the first day of the week. How we ought to praise Him that we live in a land that, in some sense at least, recognizes the sanctity of the day so that we can come together to worship and praise Him. How much we would lose were we to be denied this privilege!

LECTURE 39

QUIT YOU LIKE MEN

1 Corinthians 16:13–24

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity. I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such. The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss. The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. (vv. 13–24)

There is something delightfully personal in most of the closing messages of the apostle Paul to the various churches. He was a very human man as well

as a very spiritual one. The late Dr. C. I. Scofield used to say that when we are first converted we have to be changed from natural to spiritual, but after being saved awhile we need another conversion to become natural again—in a different sense, of course. So many of us allow ourselves to become rather stilted and unnatural in our desire to be spiritual, and we lose that sweet, gracious warmth that should characterize us as Christian men and women.

Paul was a man with a tender heart. He made very real friendships and never went back on a friend. He may have grieved over some of them who forsook him, but he continued to pray for them even when they turned away from him. And those with whom he could continue to have happy fellowship were a real joy to him. I want you to notice the various personal references in this portion. For the moment we will pass over verses 13–14.

In chapter 1, when some of them were making too much of leaders and saying, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” and others again were making Christ the head of a party and saying, “I am of Christ,” he had said, “I am so glad that I did not baptize any of you lest you should say I had baptized in my own name.” He was not setting baptism at naught in the slightest degree. Sometimes we find people who make these words the basis of their notion that Paul was making light of Christian baptism. But these Corinthians were making so much of human leaders that he would not have people going about boasting that they were baptized by Paul and therefore considering that they had a different standing from others. He was very glad, under the circumstances, that as far as he could remember, he had baptized only Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas.

And now he tells us something about that household of Stephanas. They were not little infants, but he says, “I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints).” The very first home to be opened up to the gospel, when he went to Corinth, was that of Stephanas. He and his family were brought to Christ and evidently were in a position to help others, for from that time on they “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” The word translated “addicted” is exactly the same word that is elsewhere translated “ordained.” So one could say that the household of Stephanas had “ordained themselves to the ministry of the saints.” What a blessed ordination! Instead of constantly looking for other people to do things for them, they said, “We are going in to do for others; we will try to be a blessing to others; we will set ourselves apart to help God’s beloved people.” And so the apostle says, “Submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with

us, and laboureth." You see, like Epaphroditus, they made themselves of no reputation that they might bless other people.

Stephanas himself had evidently launched out into evangelistic work, and he with others had come to meet Paul. Paul wrote this letter from Philippi and he says, "I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied." I take it that he means, "I knew you wanted to send me something to help me with my expenses but have not done so, but now these brethren have come and brought an offering and I appreciate it very much." When he was in Corinth the first time, he would not take anything from them because they were all heathen, and when they were newly come out of heathenism he did not want any one to say, "Paul is just here for what he can make out of us." He says, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service" (2 Cor. 11:8). Others gave the money that enabled him to meet part of his expenses, and what he lacked he earned by tent-making.

He did not have such a great regard for the "cloth," you know, that he could not soil his hands. He went into business with Priscilla and Aquila. But now that he has left Corinth, he is glad to receive from the Corinthian church a missionary offering to help him in his work. We at home are glad to send our money to those laboring in heathen lands to help make the gospel known. In return, we read, "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." Aquila and Priscilla used to live in Corinth, and Paul stayed with them when he was there, but now they are away and naturally send their greetings back to the home church.

"Greet ye one another with an holy kiss." There is such a thing as a Judas kiss, or, it might be, an insincere handshake. It means the same thing. Someone says to another, "Well, I am so glad to see you," and then she has hardly turned her back before she says, "Hateful old cat; I wish she would stay away!" Or, another says, "Good morning, brother, so pleased to meet you," and then he turns around and says, "I haven't any use for him." That is an unholy greeting. In the ancient times women kissed women and men kissed men. Women still kiss one another when they meet, but be sure it is a holy kiss. Do not profess to love her when deep in your heart there is resentment and unkindness. As brethren greet each other let it be in sincerity. Let the heart that is behind it be right. Said Jehu, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" And when Jehonadab said, "It is," we read that Jehu "took him up to him into the chariot" (2 Kings 10:15). We need to get rid of hypocrisy; we have a lot of pretension to fellowship that is not real. "I would have you," says the apostle, "to be sincere," that is, to be genuine in all things.

I will drop the rest of the chapter for the moment and go back to verses 13–14. Here is Paul’s closing exhortation, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity,” or, “with love.” How we need to heed this. “Watch ye.” As long as we are in this world we are in the place of danger, we are surrounded by pitfalls and snares on every hand. “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (Mark 14:38), said our Lord Jesus Christ. We dare not trust ourselves and we cannot trust the world through which we journey.

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

Since I must fight if I would reign,
Increase my courage, Lord!
I’ll hear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

It is one of the first principles of soldiery to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy, and so we must be on the watch for the enemy of our souls.

“Stand fast in the faith.” There are too many people who blow hot and blow cold; they are one thing in one company and quite different in another. But the servant of Christ, the child of God, should be one who realizes that there has been committed to him the greatest of all possible responsibilities and therefore he is to “stand fast in the faith.” As the apostle elsewhere writes to Timothy, “That good [deposit] which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Tim. 1:14). It is only in the power of the Holy Spirit that we can keep the faith.

And then we have the words, “Quit you like men.” He reproved these Corinthians in the early part of the letter because some of them were acting like babies; some were divided into little sectarian groups, and he said, “When you talk like this, it is childishness.” “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.” Whenever you see Christians fussing, quarreling about their own rights, complaining because they are not properly recognized, because people do not greet them as they think they should, because they do not get enough applause for what they do, put it down as the “baby” spirit coming out. They have not yet reached spiritual maturity. The man in

Christ is indifferent to praise or to blame. If I belong to Christ, I am here to serve Him. If I have His approbation, that is the thing that counts. "Quit you like men." May God deliver us from our babyishness. In some churches half the time of the minister is spent trying to keep weak Christians quiet over little slights. If you are living for God, people cannot slight you because you will not let them. It will not make any difference to you. "Quit you like men, be strong."

Someone says, "That is just my trouble. I know I ought to be strong, but I am so weak." Of course you cannot be strong in your own strength. We read: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). And the more you realize your own weakness, and the more you throw yourself upon Him, the more you will be able to stand in the evil day, for His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

And then again, you are not to be strong in your own human spirit, but to be strong by the Spirit of the Lord. Turn to Ephesians 3:16-17. The apostle prays, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and He has come to dwell in you if you are a believer. If He is controlling the life, dominating your will, it is not a question of your ability to stand, it is a question of His. You are simply yielded to Him, and as you are yielded to Him you are enabled to be strong and to stand for His glory.

But then, you need spiritual nourishment, and so you become strong through the Word. Writing to young men, the apostle John says, "I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong" (1 John 2:14). How did they get that strength? "And the Word of God abideth in you." You show me a weak, wobbling believer, and I will show you a Christian not giving very much time to meditation upon the Word of God. Show me one who is a strong, devoted, earnest Christian, seeking only the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will show you one who is living on the Book. As you eat the Word, as you feed upon the truth, you get strength that you cannot obtain in any other way. People go around lamenting their weakness and their leanness. I get so tired of people coming and saying, "Do pray for me that I may be a stronger Christian." What is the use of praying for you? You might say, "Do pray that I may get stronger physically." "What kind of food do you eat?" I ask. "Not any." And I would say, "Then there is no use praying for you." What you need as a Christian is a good meal of spiritual nourishment, and you can get it only in the Book. You may do all the praying you like to be a strong Christian, and your prayer will never be answered until you begin to answer it yourself by feeding upon the Word of God.

But do not stop there, for we also become strong through obedience. Turn back to the Old Testament to a very blessed Scripture, Joshua 1:7: “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.” “*To do*”—notice that. That is where we lack. We know, but we do not *do*. “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (v. 8). They had only the five books of Moses when God gave that command. You have a whole Bible with sixty-six books. Apply this to the entire Bible. “Let it not depart out of your mouth. Meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: *for then* you shall make your way prosperous, *and then* you shall have good success.” I suppose you want to make a success of your life, young man or young woman. Here then is the divinely-appointed way to do it.

And so, if you want strength, this is how you get it. Live in fellowship with Christ, walk in the Spirit, feed upon His Word, obey His Word, and then when the hour of trial comes, you will not be weak-kneed, you will not be vacillating, you will not be carried about like a leaf before the wind. You will have strength to stand, and you will be able to glorify God even in the fire. It is the testing that is the proof.

It is easy enough to be pleasant,
When life flows on like a song,
But the man worthwhile is the man with a smile
When everything goes dead wrong.

The Christian who is really worthwhile is the man who can be bereft of everything—he can lose his good clothes, his money, his home, his health—and after everything is gone he can say, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). That is the kind of Christian God would have me be, strong in the hour of trial and strong, too, in the hour of temptation. I am afraid a good many of us keep from falling into various sins because they never come very close to us, and then we look with contempt upon people who go down when stress comes. If you had been exposed to the same temptation that that poor failing brother or sister was exposed to, you might have gone down just as he or she did. You would have, if not kept by the mighty

power of God. It is only by living in fellowship with God that you will be kept from yielding. The brother said, "It is an odd thing about me, I can resist everything but temptation." A good many of us are like that. Go through the Book of God and you will find that the men who could resist in the hour of temptation were the men who knew God before the test came. David was not in fellowship with God when that awful temptation came or he never would have gone down. Joseph was tempted under far more adverse circumstances and he stood fast, exclaiming, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Our blessed Lord could say, "I have set [Jehovah] always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:8). The man who resists temptation is the man strong in the Lord before temptation comes. But there is always danger that the strong will be contemptuous of the weak. So he adds, "Let all your things be done with charity." Be very exact with yourself, but very generous in your judgment of other people; be very, very strict with yourself, but very gracious in dealing with those who are weak. Remember what they have to contend with. Perhaps they do not know the Lord as well as you do, so seek by grace to manifest the love of Christ to them.

We now come to the end of the chapter. In verse 22 we have a very solemn word before the apostle closes this letter. I wonder whether there are those listening to me who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. May I just ask you to pause and face this question, *Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?* What is your heart's answer? Can you say, "I do"? Or to be perfectly honest, do you have to say, "No, I do not love Him." May the Spirit of God give you to realize the solemnity of the warning, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." What strange expressions! I think the Holy Spirit of God providentially allowed our translators to leave those two peculiar words untranslated. One of them is a Greek word, *Anathema*, and it means "accursed, devoted to judgment." The other word, *Maranatha*, is a Syriac word and means "the Lord cometh." If you translated the entire passage, it would read like this, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be devoted to judgment at the coming of the Lord." What a solemn word that is! O unsaved one, may God give you to realize the dangerous position in which you stand. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be devoted to judgment at the coming of the Lord."

The Lord has not yet returned, and though you do not love Him, you may love Him. You cannot stir up any love in your own heart, but you may trust Him, the One who loves you, the One who gave Himself for you, the One who died on the cross for your sins. Open your heart to Him, receive Him, bow at His feet in repentance, hide nothing, confess your sins, your sins of hypocrisy, of dishonesty,

of immorality, of selfishness, of covetousness, whatever wickedness it may be. Tell Him all about it. Do not say, "O Lord, I am not much of a sinner; I never did many things that are wrong; I pray Thee forgive me," but get into the company of David who when his conscience was awakened said, "O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great" (Ps. 25:11). You would almost have expected him to say, "It isn't very great, so pardon it." No, he says, "It is great." It is such great iniquity that only a great God can pardon and a great Savior can deliver. "If with all your heart ye truly seek Him, He will be found of you." If you will turn to Him honestly facing your sin, acknowledging your guilt, trusting Him as your Savior, and then confess Him before men, He will put love in your heart and you will be able to say, "I love Him, my Savior, my Redeemer," and you will not be devoted to judgment, you will be saved from judgment, and so will be able to enter into the blessedness of this closing benediction:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." And then the apostle adds so humanly, "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus." Thank you, Paul; we are glad to get this message from you, and when we get home to heaven, we will look you up and will talk it over together. Until then we will seek to carry out the truth we have found in this epistle.

PART 2

2 CORINTHIANS

PREFACE

Like the preceding volume of addresses on 1 Corinthians, these messages were given on Sunday mornings to the congregation of the Moody Memorial Church and to the many thousands comprising the radio audience. My desire was to make them as clear, concise, and simple as possible, so that the least instructed of my hearers might benefit by them. They were reported by Mrs. A. E. Kirchhofer, to whom I am greatly indebted for her competent stenography.

—H. A. IRONSIDE

LECTURE 1

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

2 Corinthians 1:1–7

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. (vv. 1–7)

The first letter to the Corinthians, as we have seen, has to do with order in the church of God here on earth. Someone has aptly called it, “The Charter

of the Church.” There are some people who would foolishly set to one side most of Paul’s earlier epistles as though they did not have a full dispensational place for our day, but it is an important thing to note that if we were to set First Corinthians to one side we would then have no other portion of the New Testament giving us any direction whatsoever as to the order and discipline of the churches of God here in the world. Here alone we get divine instruction as to these things.

When we come to the second epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle unfolds for us the ministry of the churches of God. I say “churches” because we are thinking of individual congregations. The two terms are used in Scripture. Paul says, “I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it” (Gal. 1:13). He means the entire church wherever he found it, but he also speaks of the churches of God in Judea and in Galatia, etc., referring to local assemblies. God has Himself appointed the ministry for His churches, and we have the order and the choosing of that ministry, the nature of it, in this second letter to the Corinthians.

First of all we find that it is a divinely trained ministry. It is not a question of college training; it is not a question of graduating from a university nor of going through some particular seminary. All of these things may or may not be important in the training of a servant of God, but the first great prerequisite is that Christ’s minister be one who has learned to walk with the blessed Lord Jesus and to go through the school of affliction. At the beginning of the letter we read how wonderfully God sustains His servants in the hour of trial.

In this first chapter we have the apostolic salutation (vv. 1–2): “Paul, an apostle [a sent one] of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia.” Achaia was the name of the district, or province, as we would call it today, and Corinth was its chief city. Paul had labored for a year and a half in Corinth, and through his labors a great many throughout the entire district of Achaia had been converted. A church of God had been formed in the city, a rather remarkable church in some ways because we read, “They came behind in no gift.” Evidences of special divine favor rested upon them, and yet it was a church that, like others, had to endure trial and affliction for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Paul wishes, “Grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,” in view of trial. It is not the grace that saves that is spoken of here; they were already saved; it is the grace that sustains. We who are saved by grace still need fresh supplies of grace for every step of the way, and so we are bidden to “Come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace [for seasonable help]” (Heb. 4:16). This is the grace which the apostle

prays may be the abiding portion of the people of God. And then he asks that peace may be given. It is not peace *with* God. That they already enjoyed. Every rightly instructed believer ought to enter into that. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1)—this is peace in view of the sin question. That has been settled and our consciences now are at peace, for we know that God is satisfied and we rest in that which has satisfied Him. But there is another aspect of peace that we need. We are going through a difficult scene, traveling through a world where affliction, sorrow, bereavement, and suffering abound, and if it were not for special mercy ministered to us from day to day we might be overwhelmed by the difficulties of our pilgrim journey. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. 26:3). This is the peace for which the apostle prays, that the people of God may so walk before Him that they may enjoy His peace whatever their circumstances. As we read in Philippians 4:6, "Be not anxious about anything; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

In the early days of the church when thousands were sealing their testimony with their blood, God enabled His beloved people to go through the keenest sufferings not only without resentment toward their enemies, but with the peace of God garrisoning their hearts, and He still calls on people to give up their lives for the gospel's sake. The noble army of martyrs praise Him. Christianity is a wonderful thing; it enables people to triumph over all circumstances. As we think of what some of the missionaries of the cross are called upon to endure, it ought to make many of us at home ashamed that we allow such trivial things to disturb our spirits. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4). Think of the little things that fret us because we are a bit short of money now and then, because we have pain and aches occasionally, because we have to face a little in the way of trouble and trial. How small these things are compared with what many of God's dear servants in distant places are undergoing for Him! But the same grace that sustains them in their trial is needed to sustain us in ours, and, thank God, it is at our disposal. The apostle celebrates that grace in the verses that follow.

First, there is an overflowing of the heart in praise. "Blessed be God." Does your heart often say that? Let the Lord be praised! Let Him be worshiped and adored! How much there is to praise Him for. "Blessed be God!" Billy Bray, the Cornish miner, used to say, "If they were to put me in a barrel, I would shout, 'Glory to God!' through the bung-hole." When poverty stared him in the face, he said, "If the meal barrel is empty, I will put my head in the barrel and praise

the Lord.” One day his wife came to him and said, “Do you know, we haven’t a penny left?”

“Is that so?” he said.

“And what is more, we have no food left. I went to the barrel to see whether I could find something to do a little baking with, but there is nothing left. Now practice what you preach, and put your head in the flour-barrel and say, ‘Praise the Lord.’”

He said, “Well, if you will put yours in with me, I will.”

“All right,” she said; “I will.”

And so they went to the empty flour-barrel and both put their heads in and said, “Praise the Lord!” and then they prayed. When they came out, there was a lot of flour on their heads, they were pretty well powdered-up. They went into the study with a song of joy in their hearts, and almost the next thing there was a knock at the door, and someone said that the Lord had sent him to minister to them. It is a great thing to be able to bless the Lord whatever our circumstances are.

David says, “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Ps. 34:1). I am afraid some of us do not know much about that. We bless the Lord when we have plenty, and growl when we have not. But David says, “I will bless the Lord at *all* times.” Job was able to say, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). You know the Devil said to God, “That man loves You only for what he gets out of You; he loves You for the gifts You give him.” So God said, “Take everything away, and see.” And Satan took everything away, and Job says, “Bless the Lord anyway!” God grant that He may fill our hearts with praise! “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.” Think of that the next time you feel like growling and complaining.

“Blessed be God!” And who is this God that we bless? “Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice, He does not here suggest His Fatherhood of us as believers. That comes out later, but first of all He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see our blessed Lord is His Son by a unique relationship into which no one else can ever enter. We are sons of God by a second birth, but our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God from all eternity, and therefore in a special sense God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here then is the proof of His love. He had but the one Son and He gave Him for us, and shall we ever doubt His love because times seem a little difficult, sickness lays us low, finances seem to disappear, bereavement enters our home? “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also

freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And then notice the next title Paul gives Him, "The Father of mercies." That is, our God is the source of every mercy that comes to us. David says, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Ps. 23:6). Some of these mercies we do not always appreciate. We sometimes think perhaps that God is dealing hardly with us when He is really dealing with us in mercy. A friend of mine who went to heaven some years ago told of a time when he was riding on the top of an omnibus in Vienna, Austria, and they were held up because a flock of sheep was going down the street. As the folk on the bus leaned over to see what was going on, they noticed that there were two dogs running hither and thither to keep the sheep in the way. This friend turned to a stranger seated beside him and said, "Do you know the names of those two dogs?"

The man said, "Indeed, I do not; I have never seen a sight like this before."

"Well," said my friend, "I think I know their names."

"Do you?"

"Yes, one of them is 'Goodness' and the other is 'Mercy,' for David wrote about goodness and mercy following him all the days of his life."

You might not think it was goodness and mercy to have a couple of dogs yapping at you to keep you from going to the left or to the right, but it is God's mercy that keeps us in the straight and narrow way, and He uses trial and difficulty for that very purpose. He is "the Father of mercies."

And then again He is called "The God of all comfort." There are two things of which God is said to have the monopoly: He is "the God of *all* grace" and He is "the God of *all* comfort." All grace comes from Him, all lasting comfort comes from Him. "Consolation" and "comfort" are the same in the original text, and you get it from God. I suppose you have noticed that in the Word of God the three Persons of the blessed adorable Trinity are all spoken of as engaged in the ministry of comfort. Here we have the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as the God of all comfort. Then we remember the title the blessed Lord uses for the Holy Spirit. John 14-16 speak of Him as "Another Comforter," the "*Parakletos*," the One who comes to our help to sustain and strengthen. And in 1 John 2:1 we read, "If any man sin, we have an *advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The word *advocate* is the same Greek word translated "Comforter" in the other passages. "If any man sin, we have a Comforter." That refers to the Lord Jesus. So God the Father is the Comforter, God the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and God the Son is the Comforter. How wonderfully well we are

taken care of! The entire Godhead is engaged in comforting and sustaining the people of the Lord.

The first aspect of comfort we all need is that of forgiveness. It was the Lord Jesus who said to the poor troubled one, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matt. 9:22). Has He said that to you? Do you know the comfort of divine forgiveness? "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people. . . . Cry unto her . . . that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins" (Isa. 40:1-2). The "double" was really the doubling up of the bond after it was paid, and the debt that stood against us has been paid by our Lord Jesus, and so ours may be the comfort of forgiveness.

But then we need comfort to help in every time of trial as we go through this world, and we have the blessed Holy Spirit dwelling within us to be our Comforter. There is a lovely word in the sixty-sixth chapter of the book of the Prophet Isaiah, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." There are different Hebrew words translated "comfort." This particular one really comes from a root that means "to sigh." "As one whom his mother sighs with, so I the Lord will sigh with you." Why did they translate that "comfort"? Do you get any comfort like that? Do you remember when you were a little tot and in some trouble and distress, and mother drew you into her arms and patted your head and said, "Yes, yes, mother understands; mother feels with you in it all"? Your mother "sighed" with you, and it helped wonderfully. Mothers are wonderful people. I sometimes say they are amiable witches, they are wonderworkers. A little chap running around the yard hurts himself, the knee is cut, and mother picks him up in her arms, and even before she gets the antiseptic she kisses it and says, "Yes, yes, mother knows it hurts," and the little fellow says, "Mamma, it is better already." Our God enters with us into all our troubles; He is not an indifferent spectator.

A minister tells the story how years ago when he was a young preacher he had been very busy one entire week and did not have time to get at his Sunday sermons until Saturday morning. He felt he must take the entire day to concentrate and get ready for the Lord's Day services. He said to his wife, "My dear, I must not be disturbed this morning. I am going into my study and have to get up two sermons for tomorrow. You just tell everybody I cannot see them." And so she took her place as guardian. She had not been told to keep the children out, and the little folks came in and were playing noisily. Finally he said, "Mother, I cannot study with these children making so much noise," and so she came running with a wooden basin full of nuts and a nut-cracker, thinking that would keep them occupied. But there was only one nut-cracker and there were three

children, and they soon began fussing about who should have it. The little girl found she could crack nuts without a cracker; she could go to the door and put the nut against the jamb and pull the door and the nut was cracked. And so she held the nuts while her brother pulled the door, but suddenly the door came too quickly and she did not get her finger away, and she let out such a scream that the poor man with his overwrought nerves jumped up and said, "Mother, mother, you must come and take these noisy children away. I cannot study with them here." She came running along and said, "Come, you must come away," and started down the hallway with them. The little thing was crying so hard, and the minister could hear the mother saying, "Oh, my darling, does it hurt so much? Does it hurt so dreadfully?" And between her sobs she said, "It isn't that it hurts so much, but Daddy never even said, 'Oh!'" To feel there was no loving sympathy was what hurt. Dear child of God, am I speaking to someone lying on a bed of sickness, enduring pain and anguish? Do you love the Lord Jesus? He loves you, and your God and Father is looking down upon you and saying, "Oh." For it is written, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity he redeemed them" (Isa. 63:9). As one whom his mother says "Oh" with, so the Lord your God says "Oh" with you. His comfort is a very real thing. He feels for you, and it is said of the Lord Jesus, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He has been over the road. You can never suffer as He did; He sounded the depths of human loneliness and anguish, and now He can feel for you in all you go through.

And so the apostle says, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." We are often so selfish. We want people to take cognizance of our suffering; we want sympathy and a kind word and love. But we forget that there are others all around us who need it too, and if God comforts you in your trial, it is that you may comfort someone else. You will be able to say, "I know; I have been through it myself, and let me tell you how wonderfully the Lord undertook for me. He can do it for you too."

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." The greater the suffering, the more we are called upon to endure, the more wonderful the opportunity we have of learning what a God our God is, and how marvelously He can meet every need of the human heart.

"Whether we be afflicted," says the apostle, "it is for your consolation and salvation." He was willing to suffer that others might be blessed. "Which is

effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.” Since you Corinthians became Christians you are suffering for Christ. We suffered to bring Christ to you, and you are now entering into what we have been enduring. Let us together find our comfort in God.

“Whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.” What a word of cheer that ought to be to any tried, troubled saint of God. You are partaker of the suffering, you are going through a time of special stress, but according to the Word of God you shall be partaker of the consolation. The Lord is ready to undertake for you, He in His infinite grace is waiting to minister to your deep need. Just trust Him, and after you have suffered a while He will bring you out to His own praise and glory. Meanwhile may it be yours and mine to “glorify him in the fire.”

If you are unsaved, how much you are missing! You do not know the comfort of the Triune God. You are turning away from your best Friend, and you do not realize it. You remember the invitation of the Lord Jesus as He looked out upon the sin-sick world and said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). And this invitation comes to you today. Will you come? Will you find in Him that rest which you can never find anywhere else? No matter what your sin, no matter what your anxiety, He waits to meet every need if you will only trust Him.

LECTURE 2

THREEFOLD DELIVERANCE

2 Corinthians 1:8–20

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus. And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of

Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. (vv. 8–20)

Before continuing the exposition of this book it may be well to give a brief outline of its contents. In chapters 1–7 the apostle dwells in large measure on the trials, the character, and the training of the servant of Christ, and the result of his ministry. He uses himself largely as an example in order to bring these things home to us.

In chapters 8–9 we have the second division of this epistle, in which the apostle deals with a question that comes home to every one of us, our money. In other words, the subject is, “The Grace of Giving.” Giving is a grace. The natural man wants to get rather than to give. Here and there we run across generous folk who, even in their unconverted days, get a certain satisfaction out of giving to others, but most of us like to get, to receive rather than to distribute. But when Christ works in the soul, giving to those in need and for the furtherance of the work of the Lord becomes the joy of life. And so we speak of the Grace of Giving, and this subject is taken up very fully in these chapters.

In chapters 10–12, the third division of the epistle, we have Paul’s vindication of his own apostleship. There were those dogging his steps, moving in and out among his converts, reflecting upon his ministry and calling in question his apostolic authority. And so he found it necessary, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, to insist upon the fact that he was actually an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 13 is the conclusion.

This gives us the outline of the epistle, and with this before us we turn to consider the verses of the second section of this first chapter. Here we read of the troubles, the difficulties, the perplexities that Paul and his fellow laborers were going through, but he shows that God has a wonderful purpose in permitting all these things. It is hard for us to realize, but it is true that God can do far more with a broken man than with a man who seems strong in his own strength and power. And so He permits trouble to come upon His people, and even upon His chosen vessels, in order that they may be humble and broken in spirit before Him.

Our Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). We naturally admire a man of strength and initiative, a man who has a great deal of self-confidence and self-esteem. It was our great President Theodore Roosevelt who said, "I hate a meek man." I am sure he did not realize the implication that might be taken from that statement, for that would imply hatred of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we know he never meant. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29). We do not come naturally by meekness. In the prophecy of Zephaniah we are admonished to "seek meekness" (2:3), as though it is a very rare jewel of character which is found only by careful searching. It is not like us to seek meekness; as a rule we are naturally so proud, we are so haughty, so wickedly conceited, so self-occupied. Because of these very things if God is going to use us in His service, He has to permit us to go through experiences which will humble and break us.

We are told how Goldsmidt sat listening to Jenny Lind as she charmed thousands by her wonderful voice. Someone asked the great music critic, "What do you think of her? Isn't she marvelous?"

"Well," he said, "she is wonderful; she needs just one thing; she needs to have her heart broken. If her heart were broken, she would be the greatest singer in the world."

Afterward, you remember, he won her heart and then broke it by his unkindness, and after that there was a depth of tenderness, there was something to her singing that stirred people as nothing else had ever done in the past. So it is with preachers of the Word of God. If they stand apart from the troubles that others are going through, they will have no real message for the hearts of men. It is the man who in some measure at least is like his Master, "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," who is able to minister to a brokenhearted, suffering, distressed people. And so the apostle Paul learned to glory in tribulation and to thank God for distresses because they only fitted him the better to be a servant of Him of whom it is written, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them" (Isa. 63:9).

Listen again to these words, "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." When that great raging crowd gathered about him, howling for his life, and would have trampled him beneath their feet, and he saw nothing but a martyr's death before him, nevertheless Paul says, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." Paul could face that

howling mob and say, "It is all right if they tear us to pieces, if they tear us limb from limb. If they utterly destroy this mortal body, it means nothing to us. We have already taken the place of death with Christ, we have already said that we are dead to the world, to its favor, and to its follies, and now if they make that actually true by destroying these bodies, it is all right. We have the sentence of death in ourselves, we are men devoted to death, men who have made a rendezvous with death for Jesus' sake. Our trust is in Him who raiseth the dead, even the living God." It is only as a man knows the power of Christ working within him that he is able to speak like this, and to live it out, but this is what has enabled the people of God to triumph all down through the centuries. Again and again the Devil has stirred up hatred against Christ's servants, and the martyrs are numbered by the thousands and tens of thousands, but Satan has been foiled every time that he has tried to hinder the work of the Lord by persecution. Still the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. The gospel flourishes in times of tribulation.

The church's worst times are not times of suffering, of martyrdom. The church's most dangerous periods are those when she is enjoying the patronage of the world. The church is never in such grave danger as when the world is fawning upon it, when worldlings look upon it with favor. Our Lord Jesus warned His disciples of the danger when all men spake well of them. When people are persecuted for Christ's sake, when they have to go through affliction and troubles and sorrows, that is the time they draw nearer to the Lord. You remember the old fable in our schoolbooks, how the sun and the wind were trying to see which was the stronger. The traveler went on his way and each tried to see which could get him to take his overcoat off first. The wind blew and blew, but the traveler wrapped his coat about him more securely. And then the sun beamed upon the man and he began to perspire, and off went the coat. It is when worldly prosperity shines upon the church that off goes the robe of righteous behavior. But when the wintry blasts of trouble and persecution break upon it, then the church wraps itself all the more closely in the garment of salvation. Paul knew that tribulation was for blessing. God uses broken men, and if men will not humble themselves before Him in order to make them vessels to carry His testimony to others, He will give them experiences to break them.

Then, observe, the apostle found that despite the persecution God came in at the right moment with a threefold deliverance. In verse 10 we read: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." We can apply this to the question of our salvation. Actually the apostle is speaking of deliverance from trial and distress here on the earth. God

has delivered, and as we continue our service God does deliver, and as we look forward to the future He will yet deliver. This is faith's confidence in our gracious God and Father.

But we may apply it spiritually. Our salvation, in a spiritual sense, is threefold, and we may read it: "Who saved us from so great a death, and doth save: in whom we trust that He will yet save us." When we came to Him as poor lost sinners, He saved us from the judgment due to our sins. How great a death was that from which we were delivered. And day by day as we *go* through this scene "He doth deliver us." He delivers from the power of sin, from the strength of our own natures. He delivers from temptation; He, always with the temptation, makes "a way [of] escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). And one of these days, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him, our salvation will be completed. And so we look on to that time when "He shall yet deliver," when He will fully and completely save us. We have often put it like this: He has saved us from the judgment due to sin and from the guilt of sin; He does save us from the power of sin; by and by He will save us from the very presence of sin, giving us our glorified bodies when we will no longer have the least tendency to evil of any kind.

Soon we'll pass this desert dreary,
Soon we'll bid farewell to pain;
Nevermore be sad or weary,
Never, never sin again.

What a deliverance that will be! When we will never have to bow the knee again to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others," when we will never have to wipe away tears of penitence, for throughout endless ages we shall be free from the presence of sin in the joy of everlasting communion with our blessed Lord. That will be our complete deliverance, but meantime, as we are going on, we tread the pilgrim way, and need daily deliverance.

There are certain things that God has ordained to be of assistance along the way. One of them is mentioned in the eleventh verse: "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf." Pray one for another. Those of us trying to preach the Word, seeking to do public service for the Lord Jesus Christ, will never know until we get home to heaven how much we are indebted for sustaining grace to the prayers of God's hidden ones. My heart always rejoices when anyone writes or says to me, "I am praying for you," for I need to be

prayed for. I am so forgetful about prayer myself; so many times when I should be praying I am busy at something else, and often if there is any power at all in my messages I know it is because somebody at home or in the audience is praying for me. One owes so much to the prayers of God's beloved people. Was there ever such a man of God as the apostle Paul in all the centuries since? And yet how dependent he was upon the prayers of believers. Go through his epistles and you will find again and again the exhortation, "Brethren, pray for us." Time spent in praying for the servants of God is not a waste of time or breath. Prayer accomplishes things for God, and God will do in answer to prayer what He will not do apart from prayer.

And so the apostle says, "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf." That is, we go out to preach the Word and God uses it in blessing, but we know it is not of ourselves; there are many persons backing us up, and praying and bearing up our ministry before God.

But now the man who would count on the sustaining power of the Spirit of God in the hour of trial, and the man who has a right to ask the saints of God to pray for him, is the man who can say what Paul said, in verse 12: "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our [behavior] in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." What a statement this is! Think of being able to turn to a group among whom he has ministered and say, "We have sought to be right; we have not given ourselves to any mere oratorical clap-trap when we have stood up to preach the Word, but we have done it in simplicity and godly sincerity, in genuineness in the sight of God." Is it not strange that we can be so particular as to how we appear in the sight of men, and yet can be so unreal in the presence of God? Think of even trying to preach the Word and, as far as man can see, putting one's whole soul into the effort to glorify Christ, and yet have hidden in the heart only the desire for the applause of men.

Paul could say, "Our own conscience bears witness to the fact that we have tried to be real in the presence of God. And as we have ministered the Word we have sought to be honest with God as well as with man, not with fleshly wisdom, not depending upon the things that will reach the mere natural man and please and satisfy his craving for eloquence or excitement, but as acting in the fear of God we have had our behavior in the world. We have lived what we preached. We have not taught people to be honest and then been dishonest ourselves. We have not called on people to be humble when we ourselves were

proud. We have not exhorted others to be self-denying while we were grasping and covetous. We have not told people that they ought to be unworldly while we ourselves were going after the pleasures and follies of the world." There is something here to search our hearts, something to lead us into the presence of God in self-judgment. Would to God we could say what Paul says, "We have had our behavior in the world in all integrity."

"For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end." He knew that they were glad to recognize the fact that they had been blessed through him, but on the other hand they were being misled by people coming in and seeking to turn them away from their first confidence in this man of God.

"We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." When by and by we stand at the judgment seat of Christ, it will all be revealed. We led you to Christ, you went on with God, and so brought joy to us. But on the other hand, he knew that they were being estranged by little gossiping things that were being said by enemies of the truth, trying to alienate the hearts of the Corinthians from Paul, and so in the last part of this section he has to justify himself.

He first tells them that he meant to come to them. He had never gotten there, and some evil people had taken that up and said, "Don't you see, he never meant to go; he is afraid to go. He writes pretty strong letters when he is away from you, his writing is strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible. He doesn't dare face you about these things. He just says he will go and then when it comes to doing it, he says, 'I will not go.'" But Paul declares that his purpose was "to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea." Corinth was a port, and he had to go from Corinth up to Macedonia, and while he had intended taking that trip certain circumstances had obliged him to take another route. Then he says, "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?" In other words, did I have no real purpose?

Thus they wanted to accuse the apostle of lightness and carnality even in making appointments. He says, "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay." It was not that he was careless or light or frivolous about it, but he was not able to carry out his plans because of certain providential happenings. Paul was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He did not say one thing and mean another. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you

by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea." See how he links others with himself. There is something truly fine about a man who can always recognize the greatness of other folk. Here Paul links with him Silvanus and Timotheus. He says, "We really intended to carry this out, but we could not."

"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." God never undertakes to do something He cannot carry out. When He makes a promise, He will always carry it through. He has never made a promise to us that He will ever have to explain away afterwards. He will never say, "I meant to do that, but circumstances would not permit." We have to make confessions like that from time to time, but God never fails to keep His promises. He is able to perform every one, and Christ is the Amen to every promise of God.

LECTURE 3

OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (vv. 21-22)

We have in these verses, suggested at least, every operation of the Holy Spirit of God that is brought before us elsewhere in the New Testament. There is absolutely no ministry of the Holy Spirit as far as the believer is concerned that is not touched on here. In the Revised Version there is a slight change which helps to make it clearer. "Now He which *establisheth* us with you *into* Christ, and hath anointed us, is God."

When we think of establishment into Christ by the Holy Spirit, we necessarily think, if we are intelligent in the understanding of the truth of Scripture, of three very definite operations of the Holy Spirit. We think first of all of conviction, or sanctification by the Spirit. Secondly, we think of the new birth by the Spirit through the Word. And thirdly, we think of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. All these operations are involved in the establishment of a believer into Christ. No one is in Christ by natural birth.

“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). All men naturally are in Adam. To be in Adam means that we have received life from Adam. He was our federal head; we belong by nature to Adam’s race, and that entire race is under judgment because of sin. To be in Christ means that we have received life from Christ, and that He, the risen exalted One in heaven, is the Head of a new race, a new creation to which we now belong. The steps by which we enter into that new creation are laid down very clearly in the Word.

First of all, no one would ever come to Christ if it were not for the convicting, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit of God. Unless the Spirit of God awakens a man, unless the Spirit of God brings him to see his lost condition, convicts him of the tremendous truths of Holy Scripture, no man would ever of himself turn to Christ. That is a very solemn fact, but it is a fact nevertheless. “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). On the other hand, it is quite possible for the Spirit of God to operate in convicting power on the heart of man and yet that man do what the Jews did in Stephen’s day. It is written of them, “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost” (Acts 7:51). So it is possible to be convicted by the Spirit and yet to resist the Spirit. But there must be the convicting work of the Spirit of God or no one would ever come to Christ. Jesus Christ said, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will convince [or convict] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:7–8). Conviction is far more than a mere emotional breakdown. People often confound conviction with that. Such a breakdown may be there, and we are glad sometimes when it is. Most of us are so cold and stony-hearted that it is refreshing to see people break down and weep over their sins. The saintly Rutherford complained in his day that there were so few who ever had a sick night for sin. There must be first a recognition of one’s utterly lost condition. The Spirit of God has come to convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Our Lord Jesus says, “Of sin, because they believe not on me.” The great damning sin that is sending men down to perdition is the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not told that the Spirit of God was sent particularly to convict men of sins of the flesh and sins of a general character. Every man’s conscience convicts him of the sinfulness of licentiousness, of immoral living, of lying, of drunkenness, of pride and vanity, and all these other things, and if a man’s conscience should be so dulled by continual sinning that it seems to cease to register, still there is God’s holy law with its stern “thou shalts” and “thou shalt nots” which will convict any honest man of the sinfulness of a wicked life.

The Holy Spirit came to convict of the sin of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. God took the entire sin question into account when the Lord Jesus Christ hung on Calvary's cross, and because of what Christ did then and there, God is able to "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). But if men reject the Lord Jesus Christ, if men refuse to put their trust in Him, they have to go on to judgment, to face their own sins when they will be judged, every man according to his works. Some men rather pride themselves on their morality, on their respectability, and say, "I do not know that I need the salvation of God. I have never been guilty of breaking the moral code." Let me ask you this: Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ, God's blessed Son, as your own personal Savior? If not, if you are still rejecting Him, you are guilty of the worst sin that any one can possibly commit, for God has given heaven's best, in sending His blessed Son to earth to bleed and die for your redemption. Can there be any greater sin, any worse offense in the eyes of a holy God, than to reject that Savior, to trample on His grace, and spurn His loving-kindness? It is the work of the Spirit of God to convict men of the sin of the rejection of Christ, and then to convict of righteousness. That is, to show men that though they have no righteousness of their own God has provided one for them in His risen Son. And so the apostle cries, "[I would] be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). Yet Saul of Tarsus did not feel that way in his unconverted days. It was not until the Spirit of God convicted him of righteousness that he said, "Now I see it. I gladly part with every pretension to righteousness of my own; I would be found in Christ."

The Holy Spirit comes to convict of judgment. Not merely of judgment to come, but of the fact that this world is already under judgment, and that every believer is brought out from that judgment, and is raised up with this risen Christ, and so is called to walk apart from the world. Jesus said, "Because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11). Satan is the prince of this world, and at the cross the ancient prophecy was fulfilled, "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). At the cross Satan bruised the heel of the Son of God, but there his own head was bruised, and now he is a judged prince, and the entire scene that recognizes his authority is under judgment. You and I are called by grace to step out from it all and take our place with the Christ whom the world rejected.

Scripture sometimes uses another term for the convicting work of the Spirit of God; it speaks of the sanctification of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 6:11 the apostle mentions some very ungodly people, and then he says, "And such were

some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Sanctification means to be set apart. You who are in Christ, do you not remember when you were part of this ungodly world? You lived for the world and for self, and then the hour came when earthly things began to pall upon you, you lost your appetite for the pleasures of the world and you were deeply concerned about your sinful and lost condition. You said, "I cannot live like this; I want something better than the world has ever given me," and your trouble went on until you came to Christ and believing in Him you were justified. That was the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit of God that thus led you to Christ. When people come to Christ, when the Spirit of God leads them to His blessed feet and they believe the gospel, what takes place? They are immediately born again. "Being born again," says Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23).

Our Lord Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). People get confused about the water in that verse. They imagine sometimes that it means baptism, but Christian baptism had not been instituted when the Lord Jesus used those words. The best way to find out what it means is to go through John's writings and see how he speaks of water. You remember Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Whatever water means in John 3 it means exactly the same in John 4, and Jesus is not talking about drinking the water of baptism. Even when we are immersed we close our lips; we do not drink the water. But He is speaking of another kind of water altogether. We read in Revelation 22:17: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." What is the water of life? It is the offer of life that Jesus gives, the message that we have here in the Word of God. That Word has cleansing and refreshing power, and when we receive the Word in the simplicity of faith we are regenerated "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). So then, the Spirit convicts, sanctifies, and regenerates through the Word, and more than that, the Spirit puts us into the body of Christ.

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). Some time ago we were just so many units utterly uninterested in one another, but through grace we have been led not only to know that we are saved ourselves, but we have been brought into a blessed and hallowed unity with all fellow believers. We are

members of that one body of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head. That is what it is to be established into Christ.

And then notice the next operation of the Spirit mentioned here: "And hath anointed us." The anointing is for service and illumination. You remember in Old Testament times three kinds of people were anointed with oil: prophets, priests, and kings; and oil is the recognized type of the Holy Spirit. After His baptism in the Jordan, Jesus was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power. When the Spirit of God descended upon Him in a special way, that was His anointing for His threefold office. He was Prophet on earth, He is Priest in heaven, and He will be King when He comes again, and this blessed ministry is all in the power of the Holy Spirit. Though our Lord Jesus Christ was God, yet as to His Manhood He chose to do all His works in the Spirit's power, and so as believers we are anointed by the Spirit, and even the youngest believer has this anointing. You may have been converted only a day or two ago, but the Spirit of God now dwells in you as the anointing, and when you want instruction and power for service, look up to God that He by the Spirit may give you the instruction you need through the Word, and that He may empower you to serve Him.

In the next place we read, "Who hath also sealed us." A seal speaks of ownership. The same Holy Spirit who regenerated us, who baptized us into the body of Christ, who is our anointing for service and our illumination, dwells within us as the seal that we belong to God. As I look at a group of people I cannot tell a Christian from one who is not converted, but as God looks down He sees every believer in whom the Holy Spirit dwells and says, "That is one of Mine," and wherever the Holy Spirit is not dwelling in a person, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). The seal is the mark that we belong to Him, "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). And again we are told in that same epistle to the Ephesians, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (4:30). Notice two things: first, how clearly it brings out the personality of the Holy Spirit. You cannot grieve anything that is not personal. You can grieve those you love the most by bad behavior or coldness or indifference; and so, you may grieve the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit dwells in you to claim you for Christ, and if you are careless in your life as a believer, allowing worldliness or carnality or anything that is un-Christlike a place in your life, you are grieving the Holy Spirit of God. You might expect it to go on, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, lest He leave you, lest you grieve Him away," but it says, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are *sealed unto the day of redemption*." This suggests the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit of God. "He which

hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). When He is come, our Savior tells us, He shall "abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). The very reason you should not grieve Him is that He remains within you whether grieved or ungrieved, but if your behavior is such that you are grieving the Holy Spirit, you are going to be a very unhappy Christian. The happy Christian is the one living in the power of an ungrieved Spirit. It is absolutely impossible to live carelessly and be happy. The happy Christian is the holy Christian.

The apostle adds, in closing this passage, "And given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." The Holy Spirit dwelling within us is the earnest of that full blessing which we are to have at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him, and the more the Holy Spirit is given His right of way in our lives now, the more we are permitted to enjoy of that which shall be ours in all its fullness someday. And so we see that the filling of the Holy Spirit is connected with the earnest. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). He lives within us, and everything that we enjoy of a spiritual nature we enjoy through the indwelling Holy Spirit. "But," someone says, "I feel so limited at times; there is so much I ought to enter into, so much more God has for me that I do not seem to lay hold on." Right here comes the admonition, "Be filled with the Spirit."

Every believer has the Holy Spirit in him as the earnest. Someone says, "But you mean we need more of the Holy Spirit." No, I do not mean that at all. The Holy Spirit is a Person, and He lives in you, and so I do not say you need more of the Holy Spirit, but I do say the Holy Spirit wants to possess more of you. That is the trouble with so many of us, we crowd the Spirit of God off into some one corner of our hearts. A great many of us live our lives almost in airtight compartments. The Holy Spirit can have His place in our religious lives, but what about the home life, the business life, the social life, and even the church life? We often live our lives in these compartments, and when at home we live one way, when at business another, in our social obligations another, and when we go to church another, and then we have our little time of spiritual devotion. There can be no happy, triumphant Christian life until all these partitions are broken down and your life comes entirely under the Spirit of God. Let Him have His way in everything, and there will be a life of victory and blessing. That is what it means to "be filled with the Holy Spirit."

The story is told of a young man who was ashamed of his childhood home and of his mother. He built a beautiful home and had a little place built in the attic for his mother and brought her there to live. But he kept the secret even

from his wife as to who she was, until one day she found it out and said to him, "What is this? Your mother hidden away up there in the attic? I never dreamed who was up there."

"Well, you know," he said, "she has never had any education; she isn't accustomed to our way of living, and so I thought it better that she should be hidden away up there."

"No," said the wife, "we will never treat her like that. Your mother is to come down from the attic, and is to have the run of the house and enjoy herself to the fullest degree."

The Holy Spirit of God lives in you, believer. Is He hidden away in the attic of your life or has He the run of the house? Has your life been surrendered to Him? Are you yielded to His control?

You have seen how every operation of the Spirit of God is suggested. But somebody says, "What about the gifts of the Spirit?" He is not speaking here of gifts, but all the gifts are linked with the anointing of the Spirit, and so God has given various gifts to different believers, but it is all through the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God who fits us for any special service which the Lord may have for us.

LECTURE 4

LED IN CHRIST'S TRIUMPH

2 Corinthians 1:23–2:17

Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand. But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you,

whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. (1:23–2:17)

There are a number of verses in this portion of the Word, any one of which might furnish the theme for a lengthy address, but in giving these expositions I cannot pause on every important verse in the way I should like to do, but must occupy you rather with the general trend of the apostle's words, the main thoughts that are emphasized. I want to confine myself largely to verses 14–16, where the saints are seen as led in Christ's triumph. But to lead up to that and to connect with that which we have had previously, I will go over the intervening verses.

Some of the Corinthians had charged Paul with lightness, with insincerity, with carelessness, because he had intimated that he was going to visit them and then had refrained from doing so. They said, "Yes, he promises one thing and does another." Now he explains more fully just why he did not visit them at an earlier date in accordance with his first intention. "I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand." After having made up his mind to visit them he had heard of their very disorderly conduct; they were going to law one with another, petty jealousies had come up among them, there was a sectarian spirit manifested, some were saying, "I am of Paul," others, "I am of Apollos," and still others, "I am of Christ," as though Christ were the Head of a party instead of the Head of the whole church. And then there were very grievous things of a moral character among them. One had fallen into very marked sin, so much so that the name of God was blasphemed

by the world outside because of the wickedness of this professing Christian, and Paul says, as it were, "If I came to you after learning these things I would have to come among you with a rod, simply to scold you, to speak sternly to you, and I could not do that. I loved you so tenderly that I preferred to stay away and write to you and pray for you, and to call upon God to enable you to judge these evil things. Now I am glad to find that you have judged them."

He told them in the previous letter that they were to put away that wicked man who had fallen into licentiousness, who was guilty of the sin of fornication, for otherwise he would corrupt the whole fellowship. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9). "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). They were to refuse Christian fellowship to such an one, they were to put away from among them that wicked person. They had acted upon that, and because they had, he now feels differently toward them. He did not want to come until they obeyed his instructions—"But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?" That is, if when I came to you my time had to be devoted to bringing before you these corrupt things that have been permitted in your assembly, it would break my heart. You would be made sad and I would be sadder, so I stayed away and prayed and wrote to you. "I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all." In other words, he said, I had this confidence that if once these evil things were really brought to your attention, your Christian conscience would make you see the importance of dealing with them, you would not go on tolerating the wickedness. And that indeed had been true. "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." It was no easy thing for Paul to bring these things to their attention, nor could he do it in a hard, legal way. They were his children in the faith, he loved them tenderly, and it grieved his spirit to find that they had turned aside to evil ways and were bringing dishonor on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That should ever be the attitude of a true pastor in the church of God.

Now he comes to speak particularly of that wicked man who had fallen into the gross sin of immorality and had been put away from Christian fellowship. If every person guilty of immorality in the professed church could be dealt with and put away today, how much more power there would be in the assemblies of

the saints. Of course there is always hidden sin that we cannot deal with, but when it comes to light God's Word demands that it be dealt with and the wicked person put away. We might say, "Well, but if we excommunicate that man, we will drive him from Christian influence and he will get worse and worse." God said, "Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). Put him outside of the assembly of God, put him back in the world to which he belongs, because he is living according to the world's standards, and leave him there until God brings him to repentance. Then restore him to fellowship.

"If any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment [this discipline], which was inflicted of many." It was not Paul's discipline. Paul had told them what to do, and they did it. The responsibility rests, not on the apostle, but on the church of God in a given place. And so the church had inflicted discipline on this man. Now the man is repentant, he proves by his repentance that though he had failed he was really a child of God after all. What will they do with him now? "So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him." If the Devil cannot get the church of God to overlook an outbreak of iniquity and to go on as though nothing had happened, he will seek to have them go to the other extreme. If discipline is inflicted upon a person and there is sincere repentance, then the Devil will try to harden the hearts of God's people against him. They will say, "We cannot trust that man; he was in our fellowship once, and proved so bad we had to put him out, and we cannot trust him in the future." No, no, the apostle says; you are not to act like that. That is just as wrong as it is to tolerate sin. It is wrong to keep him out when he repents, for what is the church of God after all but a company of repentant sinners? And what is heaven? It is a home for repentant sinners. No one will ever get into heaven but repentant sinners. I am speaking of adults for, of course, all the little ones are taken home to heaven. There "their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). The church of God is simply a gathering, not of people who have never failed, but of repentant sinners, and if a man repents, bring him back into fellowship. Perhaps he feels so defiled, so bad, that he will never ask for restoration. He will say, "I have disgraced the Lord, I am not fit for fellowship." Do not wait for him to ask, go to him and confirm your love toward him. "For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. Ye were obedient when I said, "Put him

away”; now let me see whether you are just as obedient when I say, “Bring him back as a repentant person.”

Then he says, “To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ.” He had already forgiven this offender in his own heart. He says, “I have taken that attitude toward this repentant offender. Once I demanded that he be put away, now I forgive him as simply one with you in this act.” “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” His devices are, first, tolerate sin, and then if you won’t do that but you deal with sin in discipline, then never forgive. How often that spirit is manifested among Christians! There is not a great deal of discipline in the church of God today. A minister said to me one day, “One of our leading members is well known to be supporting a mistress in a hotel downtown, and breaking the heart of his wife and children, yet he is a leader in our church, a very wealthy man. If we were to bring him up for discipline it would split the church, and I do not know what we would do without his money.” I said, “Better split the church and go on with the godly part. God’s Word is clear, ‘Put away from among yourselves that wicked person’ (1 Cor. 5:13). Let him take his tainted money and go.” God does not want the money of a fornicator, of an adulterer, of a drunkard, of an extortioner, of a covetous man. He does not need such money. God has plenty of money to support His work. Satan says, “Be easy on him; we must not judge one another.” But God’s Word says that we ought to judge those that are within. When there is blatant sin we are to deal with it. The one side is, put him away. But when he repents and says, “Brethren, I have sinned, but by the grace of God I have turned from my sin; will you restore me to your love and confidence?” what are we to do then? You ought now to forgive. Perhaps he will get so thoroughly under the power of remorse that he will just break completely and say, “I will never be able to retrieve myself. The people of God will never have confidence in me again. What difference does it make what I do?” Show him now that you can forgive as well as discipline. “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us.”

“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord.” He had been very near to them; he was at Troas, which is just across the water, and he would have liked to go ahead with the wonderful opportunity for service which came to him, but he was so restless thinking about their difficulties that he could not remain. “I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.” But no matter what circumstances he is called upon to pass through he says, “Thanks be unto God, which always causeth

us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place." Or, it may be rendered, "Thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us in Christ's triumph." This is a very lovely picture. As Christ's servants we are continually being led in His triumph. What does he mean by that? It is not merely that Christ always makes us victors, but whatever circumstances the people of God may be called upon to pass through we are always led in Christ's triumph. It is a striking figure of speech, a wonderful picture that he puts before us.

When a Roman general had been out into some distant land to put down an uprising, or to win new lands for the Roman empire, to defeat great armies, the senate frequently voted him "a triumph." When he and his army returned to Rome a public holiday was declared, and all the people thronged to the main thoroughfare to see this general enter in triumph. Here is a long line of captives, representatives of the people he has subjugated. They are in chains, and are holding censers in their hands, and sweet, fragrant incense arises. Then comes the general, and behind him another long line of captives bearing censers. These in front are to be set at liberty, and the fragrant incense is the odor of life to them. Those behind are condemned to die, and are going on to the arena; they are to be thrown to the wild beasts or put to death in some other way, and the fragrant incense that arises from their censers is a savor of death. The general marches on in triumph. There are some with a savor of life, there are others with a savor of death. The apostle says, as it were, Christ, our great Redeemer, has won a mighty victory over all the powers of hell. He has led captivity captive and given gifts unto men. He has annulled him that had the power of death, and God has voted Him a triumph; and now Christ is marching triumphantly through the universe, and He is leading us in His triumph, and we who are His captives by grace are a sweet savor unto life, but even men who refuse His grace must glorify God in their judgment, and they are a sweet savor, but unto death. So he says, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" As we march on with Christ proclaiming His gospel, that gospel is to God a sweet savor, whether men believe it or refuse to believe it. But to all who believe it, it is a sweet savor of life; to all who refuse to believe it, it is a savor of death, but its fragrance is just as precious to God whether believed or refused.

"Who is sufficient for these things?" Let me put it this way: I stand up and try to preach, I attempt to give the gospel of the grace of God knowing my message

is to have a double effect, some people are going to believe it, and it will add to their joy for all eternity. Some people are going to refuse it, and it will make it worse for them than if they had never heard it at all. I may say, “My God, I would rather not preach than make it worse for men in eternity.” But God says, “Go on and preach My Word; it is your business to give it out whether they receive it or reject it. The responsibility is theirs.” “Who is sufficient for these things?” “Our sufficiency is of God” (3:5).

“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” That word *corrupt* is a Greek word used for small trading, and suggests the thought of what we call, “grafting.” We are not of those who huckster the Word of God; in other words, we are not of those who are giving out the Word of God for the money we can get out of it, we are not selling the Word of God; we are seeking to minister God’s truth for the blessing of His people and the salvation of souls. What a wonderful thing to be led in Christ’s triumph! He went down into death, He came up in triumph, having spoiled principalities and powers. He has made a show of them, triumphing over them, and we are linked with Him who says, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev. 1:18).

LECTURE 5

THE EPISTLE OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 3:1–6

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (vv. 1–6)

The first two chapters, which we have already considered, have been largely occupied with the experiences, the trials, and the victories of the apostle Paul and his companions, while they were engaged in the marvelous ministry committed to them of going out into a world of sin to preach the gospel of the grace of God. And now in this third chapter the apostle develops for us in a very striking way the nature of the ministry committed to them, the ministry of the

new covenant. He deals in the first place with the epistle of Christ. Notice how he introduces it.

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?” What does he mean? Why does he use language like this? As we have noticed on other occasions, one of the greatest trials that the apostle Paul had to meet as he went around in his ministry was the opposition of false brethren, men who professed to be Christians, but who in reality were Jewish legalists who had never apprehended the freeness and the liberty of the gospel, and they were continually dogging his steps. He would scarcely have left a place before they would come in and endeavor to discredit the message by discrediting the messenger. One of their ruses was to call in question his apostleship. For instance, they might put it like this to these Gentile Christians: “Paul! Why, he is no true apostle! The apostles were those who were educated by the Lord Jesus Christ when He was here in the flesh, they had their schooling under His own personal instruction. They kept company with Him for three-and-a-half years, and then after He died and ascended to heaven it was they who went forth with authority to proclaim the message of the new covenant. Paul was not one of them, he did not even know Christ when He was here on earth. More than that, he has no commission from the apostolic college at Jerusalem. Challenge him and see. He will tell you he has received no authority from Peter or James or John or any of the rest, authorizing him to go forth on this mission. He simply is a freelance, and you need to be a bit careful of these freelances; you never can tell just what they have up their sleeves. For instance, when Paul visited you did he have a letter of commendation? Did he have a letter from the church at Jerusalem or from one of the other churches, showing that he was in good standing in the place from which he came?”

Paul had been in Corinth for a year-and-a-half, and his life had been as an open book. They had seen for themselves the kind of life that he lived, and knew how genuine his profession was. Now he is away from them and is anticipating visiting them again, and some of these Judaizers have I said, “If I were you, before giving him the platform I would at least take the precaution of asking him for his letter, and see whether he has a letter of commendation.” It is perfectly right and proper, you know, to carry letters. When Apollos, a total stranger, was going from Ephesus to Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila gave him a letter commending, or recommending, him to the confidence of the brethren in Corinth, and as Christians moved from place to place it was right that they should carry a letter, but think of demanding anything like that from the apostle Paul! Why, he says, “Do we then have to accredit ourselves with

you, you among whom we have labored for a year-and-a-half, you whom we have led to Christ? Is it necessary that now we should have some kind of a letter of commendation? Do we need a letter of commendation to you, or do we need one from you? Is it necessary that we should be commended by you to other people? The fact of the matter is, if it is a letter that is wanted, you yourselves constitute our letter. 'Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.' If people want to know whether we are genuine or not, they can look at you. Who were you when we came to you? You were poor ungodly heathen, lost in sin, in bondage to iniquity of the very vilest kind, and what are you now? Redeemed men and women who have been brought into the joy and gladness of a new life through the message that we imparted to you. Is not that letter enough? Does that not prove that we are divinely sent? Is not that the Holy Spirit's own *imprimatur*, as it were, put upon our message. 'Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us.' Through you God is showing what Christ is able to do for sinners who trust Him. We, of course, were the instruments." "Ministered by us, written not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." God, then, is manifesting Himself to the world through His church.

In Old Testament times we do not have a message going out to the world as such. God revealed Himself to Israel on Mount Sinai, and gave them His message on tables of stone. Stone, you know, is very hard, very cold, and very unyielding, like the message of the Law itself, but that message was never sent out to the Gentile world. Judaism was not a missionary religion. You never hear of the representatives of Judaism going out into all the world to proclaim the glories of the Old Covenant. Not at all. God had not yet come out to man; He was still dwelling in the thick darkness. The veil was unrent, and God was testing man through one particular nation, the nation of Israel, the very best group He could find. "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). If the very best people cannot keep the law, there is no use carrying it to the ungodly Gentiles, and so Judaism had no missionary message. Things have changed now. God has come out to men, the veil is rent, the light is shining out, and the message from the risen Christ is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And wherever that message is carried, men read its power in the changed lives of those who believe it. That is what the apostle means when he says that we are the epistle of Christ.

I sometimes hear people pray, "O Lord, help us all to be epistles of Christ." You never get it that way in Scripture. It does not say that you are an epistle of Christ and I am an epistle of Christ. It takes the whole church to make His epistle, but each one of us is one little verse in that epistle. I should hate to have anyone judge Christ simply by me. I hope there is a little of the grace of God seen in my poor life, but take the church of God as a whole and see what a wonderful letter you have. What a marvelous epistle is God's church telling the world what the grace of God can do for sinners who trust in Him. And it is such a vital thing, such a tender thing, "written not with ink," but by "the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." God gives to believers in the gospel a new heart, a new nature, a heart made tender by divine grace, in order that men may go out and manifest the love of Christ to a lost world. The apostle says this gives us confidence, "Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward." If it were not that we could see the change in the life of a man through believing our message we would lose confidence, but when we see His grace working in this miraculous way, then we have trust toward God that we are indeed His chosen servants sent to make known the exceeding riches of His grace.

The epistle to the Philippians gives us a beautiful hint of the way men read the truths of God in the church of God. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). I am not to work out my own salvation in my own power but, you see, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Phil. 2:13-16). Men, we often say, will not read their Bibles, and we are called upon to live Christ so that as they read us they will see that there is reality in the gospel and the message we preach, because of the change that has come in our lives.

I wish we might test ourselves along that line. Is my life really witnessing for Christ? Is it really counting for God? Do the members of my own family see that God has control of me? Do they see something of the patience of Christ, the meekness of Christ, the purity of Christ, something of the love of Christ, the tender compassion of Christ, in me? Am I manifesting these things? As I go out in the world, as I mingle with others in business, in my daily employment, or

whatever it may be with which I am occupied, do those with whom I have to do most intimately see any difference between me and those who do not make the profession that I make? Do they say, "Well, So-and-So may be a Christian; if he is I do not think much of Christianity?" Or are we so living Christ that others looking upon us say, "Well, if that is Christianity, I wish I knew something of it in my own soul"? I have heard people give testimony like that at times, I have had them come to me and say, "I have met one of your people, or, I work with him, and there is something about him that appeals to me; I cannot help but believe in the reality of the message you preach because of the effect it has on the people who believe it." That is what Paul means when he says that we are the epistle of Christ.

We are Christ's letter. What is a letter for? It is to express one's mind. And what are some of the important things in a letter? First, legibility. You want to be able to read it. If you and I constitute the epistle of Christ the letter should be a legible one, one easily read. People ought not to have to puzzle their heads over it and say, "Well, I don't know, I really cannot understand that. It may be Christianity, but it does not seem so to me." And then a letter should contain clear, definite statements. Clearness of meaning characterizes a well-written letter. You do not like to get a letter and go through it all and say, "I can read it, but for the life of me I cannot understand what he means." You and I are called upon to so clearly set forth the grace that is in Christ that people will not have to puzzle over it, but that they will be able to say, "Oh, now I understand; I see what Jesus does for the soul that trusts Him. If that is Christianity, I should like to know the same blessed life myself." And then, you know, a real letter reveals the personality of the one who writes it. Somebody has said that we have almost lost the art of letter-writing nowadays. Everything is so standardized that our letters do not reveal our personality at all. Take some of the volumes of old-fashioned letters, what a delight it is to take from the bookshelf some of Carlyle's or Browning's letters, and others of the great men of the past. How marvelously they reveal the personality, the mentality of the soul, the spirit of those men. The church is the epistle of Christ, and the church is expected to reveal to men the personality, the loveliness, the beauty, the preciousness of Jesus. Oh, to have men say, "I did not know Christ until I saw So-and-So, and then I said to myself, 'Jesus must be a wonderful Savior, for I have seen a little of what He is, revealed in this or that man or woman.'" That is what it means to be an epistle of Christ, to be manifesting Him.

And so the apostle says, it is not that we can do this in ourselves, that we are sufficient of ourselves—"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything

as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” Let us never get away from that. Christianity is a supernatural thing. I am persuaded that one of the greatest mistakes that thousands of people make is to imagine that Christianity is simply a natural thing, a natural life lived on a higher plane than the ordinary life. A man may say, “I think perhaps I have been too selfish, too worldly; I am going to start in and lead a Christian life; I am going to be a Christian, and so am going to join the church, be baptized, take the sacrament, read the Scriptures, and have family prayer.” You can do all of those things outwardly, and yet not be a Christian at all. Christianity is not the natural life lived on a higher plane. It is a divine life manifested in the energy of the Holy Spirit. That is why men need to be born again. That is an old-fashioned theme, but we cannot emphasize it too much. The Lord Jesus Christ said to Nicodemus, a very good man, a very religious man, “Except a man be born [again], he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). The natural man can manifest only what is in his natural heart; there must be a second birth. I ask you, in the name of my Master, have you ever known that great change which the Bible calls the new birth? If not, you have never taken the very first step in the Christian life. You cannot live a Christian life until you have a Christian life to live. You must receive the life before you can manifest it. “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” If you are saying, “I have heard a good deal about that, but my perplexity is that I do not know how I may be born again,” let me give you two or three passages from God’s Holy Word, and may His divine Spirit wing them home in power. John 1:11: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” How do you receive Him? You receive Him into your heart, open your heart to Him, and let Him come in. John 1:12–13: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Here are three ways by which people do *not* become Christians, and only one way by which they do. “Not of blood.” You are not born a Christian because your parents were Christians; the grace of God is not transmitted by natural generation. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). In the second place, “Nor of the will of man.” There is no man so great, so good, that he can make another person into a Christian. We believe in Christian baptism, but he makes a tremendous mistake who supposes that any man can become a Christian through submission to the ordinance of baptism, or that any minister can make another man a Christian by baptism, or by giving the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. In the

third place, "Not by his own will." No man can will himself into becoming a Christian. No man can become a Christian by saying, "I have made up my mind, and from now on I am no longer a sinner, I am a Christian." That will no more make him a Christian than a man, who by birth is an American but has become infatuated with the Russian system, can change his nationality by saying, "From now on I am no longer an American, I have decided to be a Russian." You are what you were born, and we were born sinners, and have to be born again in order to become Christians, and so the verse says, "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." There is just one way by which we become Christians, by receiving Christ. Then we are born again. The apostle Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. . . . And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:23, 25). When you believe the gospel, when you accept the message that God has given, when you accept the Savior whom God has sent, then you are born of God, and you become part of this great company designated, "the epistle of Christ." And the same God through whose mighty power we are born again is the One who sends His servants forth to minister His gospel in divine energy.

The apostle concludes this section in verse 6 by saying, "Who also hath made us able ministers [he is not dwelling on his own ability, but the Spirit of God working in and through him has enabled him to minister in power] of the new testament [we do not belong to the old covenant, we are through with that, we are enjoying the spiritual blessings of the new covenant. The word for 'testament' and 'covenant' is exactly the same]; not of the letter, but of the spirit." Do not misunderstand that. When he says "not of the letter," he does not mean not of the letter of the Word of God. They tell us that we take the Bible too literally, and ask us whether we do not know that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." That is what he says here, but by *letter* he does not mean the literal Word. You cannot be too literal in reading your Bible. God could have given it in another way if He meant us to have it that way, but He wants us to take it as it is. What is meant here? "The letter" refers to that which was engraven on the tables of stone, and therefore "the letter" is the law. But now you have the new message, the message of the New Testament, in the energy of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Paul says, "We are not law preachers, we do not go to men and say, you must give up your meanness, you must be obedient to the law," but we say, "What you cannot do yourselves God is able to do for you by the energizing power of His Holy Spirit."

If you will open your heart to Christ, He will give you a new life, and put a new power in you. He will enable you to live Christ, to be a part of the epistle of Christ. The letter, the law, could only kill, could only condemn. It is called in the verses that follow “the ministration of death,” but the gospel of God’s grace preached in the power of the Spirit gives life to all who believe.

LECTURE 6

THE GLORY OF THE NEW COVENANT

2 Corinthians 3:7–18

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it

shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (vv. 7–18)

Verses 7–16 of this section constitute a long parenthesis. Let me show you how evident that is. Let us go back and read verses 5–6, and then connect with them verse 17, and you will see these two portions are intimately connected and how all the intervening verses come in parenthetically. “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. . . . Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The apostle leads us through this lengthy parenthesis in order to contrast for us the fading glory of the old covenant with the unchanging, unending glory of the new covenant of grace.

First he says, “If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” Notice the two ministries that he contrasts, “the ministration of death” and “the ministration of the spirit.” The ministration of death was the law; the ministration of the Spirit is the gospel of grace. He has already called the law “the letter,” and a very exact translation of the first part of verse 7 would be, “If the ministration of death, the letter, engraven in stones, was glorious [and it was], how much more shall the ministration of grace be glorious?”

The reference, of course, is not to the first giving of the law but to the second. I wonder whether we are all familiar with the difference. When God first gave the law at Sinai He wrote that law Himself on tables of stone that He had prepared, and He gave them to Moses amid accompaniments of thunder and burning fire and a mighty voice that filled the people’s hearts with fear, so that even Moses himself said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” He calls that “God’s fiery law.” It was absolutely rigid; its principle was, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, burning for burning, cutting for cutting.” It was absolute intrinsic righteousness. Whatever a man actually deserved according to that law he was to receive. But before Moses came down from the mount, the people had broken that law. The first commandment was, “Thou shalt have

no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Exod. 20:3-5), and before Moses reached the foot of the mount the people were dancing around a golden calf. Moses knew if he had brought that law into the camp, there could be nothing but condign judgment. That holy law would of necessity have demanded the death of the entire people, so Moses broke those tables on the side of the mount, and came down empty-handed, and then he became the intercessor for the people and pleaded with God to show mercy.

The Lord said that He would destroy them but make of him a great nation. But Moses said, "Oh, no, if someone has to be destroyed, destroy me, and save the people," and in that he manifested the spirit of Christ. And so he went up into the mount again for forty days, and this time God gave the law tempered with mercy, gave it recognizing the fact that the people themselves would not keep it, but provided with this second giving of the law a system of sacrifices whereby the penitent lawbreaker could draw nigh to God with that which typified the coming into the world of His blessed Son. It was still law, but it was law tempered by grace, and it meant so much to Moses to find out that the Lord had thoughts of grace in His heart for the poor people, that when he came down from the mount his very face was beaming because of his association with God. He had learned to know God in a new way during those forty days, and when the people saw the light shining from his face they were amazed, and Moses put a veil over his face until he had finished speaking with them, and when he went before the Lord again he took it off. The apostle tells us why he did that.

The thought many of us have had was that Moses put a veil over his face because the glory was so bright that the people could not look upon him, but here we are told by the Holy Spirit that he put a veil over his face because he knew that that glory was fading and passing, and he did not want the people to see the glory disappear. The glory of that covenant could not last because too much depended upon sinful men. And the glory faded and judgment took its place, and so even that second giving of the law proved to be a ministration of death instead of salvation, because of the sinfulness of man's heart. But, says the apostle, if even that ministration came to the people in glory, how much more shall the ministration of the Spirit, the glad wondrous gospel of pure grace, excel in glory! And so we go today to a lost world to tell men that God's face is shining with love and compassion upon humankind.

Oh, the glory of His grace
 Shining in the Saviour's face,
 Telling sinners from above,
 God is light, and God is love.

"If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." The law is called, "the ministration of condemnation," because it asked of men an obedience which sinful men were not able to give. The law came demanding righteousness, but the present message of grace is called "the ministration of righteousness," because it comes giving righteousness to men who are unable to produce a righteousness of their own. This is what made it so precious to the apostle Paul. He had spent years of his life trying to produce a righteousness suited for God, but when he caught sight of the risen Christ and heard Him saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," and knew that blessed Savior had fulfilled the law for him, that He had died and had been raised again, Paul exclaimed, "[That I] might be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). Here is a ministration of glory indeed! "The glorious gospel," it is called elsewhere, "of the blessed God." That word translated "blessed" really means happy. Just think of it—the happy God! What is it that makes God happy? It is because He Himself has found a way whereby His love can go out to guilty sinners, and He can save the very vilest of men and make them fit for His presence. God is a lover of men. Judgment is His strange work, for "he delighteth in mercy" (Mic. 7:18). He hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11). But when He tested men under law, there was nothing but the curse for them, for they could not fulfill its requirements. Now God has met every need of sinful man in the cross of Christ, and He offers an untarnishable righteousness to those who trust His blessed Son. And the heart of God rejoices as His face shines upon sinners.

"For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." It is like the difference between the moon and the sun. At night as you look upon the moon shining it has wondrous glory, and your heart cannot but be stirred. But have you sometimes seen the moon hanging low upon the horizon after the sun had risen? What a pale, misty, watery-looking thing it was. It was the same moon that shone so brilliantly the night before, but its glory passed away in the light of the glory that excels, and so it is that the very highest point to which the Old Testament can bring us, the very

highest experiences that Old Testament saints had under the law (and they were glorious in their way, they were precious experiences while they lasted, for there was a glory connected with God's dealing with men under that old covenant), have no glory at all compared with the glory that excelleth. Have you ever noticed that even some of the most devoted saints in Old Testament times were never absolutely sure of their final salvation? Job was in utter bewilderment, David was perplexed, when Hezekiah received word that he was going to die, he turned his face to the wall and wept and sobbed, and was in great distress, but now in this New Testament dispensation of grace, the poorest, feeblest soul that trusts in Jesus may have absolute assurance of his perfect acceptance with God.

An old Scot lay suffering, and his physician had told him it was a matter of only a few hours or a few days at the most. A friend really interested in him came to spend a little time with him and said, "They tell me you will not be with us long. I hope you have got a wee glimpse of the Savior's blessed face as you are going through the valley of the shadow."

And the dying man said, "Away with the glimpse, man; it's a full view of His blessed face I have had these forty years, and I'll not be satisfied with any of your glimpses now."

That is "the glory that excelleth," the glory that shines in the face of a reconciled God because the sin question has been eternally settled. In view of this, says the apostle, "We use great plainness [or boldness] of speech." I know that to some people the expressions that are used in these New Testament epistles must seem very bold; they cannot comprehend them. Speaking with a Roman Catholic priest a number of years ago about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, I was telling him about the time when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16), and I said, "When that time comes, I am going up with that ransomed throng, I am going to be caught up to be forever with the Lord."

He looked at me a little puzzled, and said kindly, "My dear sir, you must think you are a very great saint to be so sure that you will be taken up at that time."

I said, "No, it is not that I think I am a great saint, I am really one of the least of all saints, and I found out some years ago that I was a great sinner; but I found out that Jesus is a great Savior, and that He manifests great grace to great sinners by taking all our sins and settling for them on Calvary's cross. And so I trust Him, and trusting Him I know my sins are gone, and therefore I am able to rest in His Word, "If I go . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that

where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). "We use great boldness of speech." I do not know anything but the gospel of the grace of God that gives this boldness of speech, this absolute assurance that sins are put away, and that one is saved for eternity. But this is the portion of those who have received in their heart the ministry of reconciliation.

"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." Moses covered his face, as we have seen, that they might not see the glory fade. That fading glory pictures this old dispensation that is abolished. There is nothing of it left for us. There is a new dispensation in which we live which has taken its place. "But their minds were blinded"—those who have never moved out of the Old Testament into the New, they who attach all their hopes to the Old Testament—"for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ."

I wonder whether some of you are my Lord's own brethren after the flesh, you belong to the nation of Israel, those whom we call the Jews, God's earthly people. You are one for whom the Christian should have the deepest affection. You gave us our Savior and, under God, you gave us our Bible. God used Jewish hands to write this Bible, and a Jewish mother gave birth to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and yet we Christians are enjoying the glory of this new covenant and so many of you, God's earthly people after the flesh, are without this blessing and without this joy. Yet, you still believe your Bible, you still believe the Old Testament, you still believe that those books that comprise the old covenant are really the Word of the living God. You read that Bible and still do not have peace, you have no assurance that your sins are forgiven, you do not know yet for certain that you are right with God, and that if called from this world you would go immediately to Abraham's bosom. Do you know why? Your eyes have not yet been open to see Him of whom Moses and all the prophets spoke. Listen to this word spoken by a Jew, a Jew whose name was Simon Peter. He says, "To him [that is, to Jesus] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Thousands of Jews have looked through the Old Testament telescope to Christ as the fulfillment of all the types and shadows of the law, the true Messiah of Israel, the promised Redeemer, that Righteousness which God promised to reveal in due time, and, finding Him, the veil has dropped from their hearts and they are rejoicing in the new covenant. This same privilege is yours. "For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done

away in Christ.” Think of reading the Old Testament with a veil over it, or with the veil over the heart. If you turn to the New Testament and see how wonderfully Christ fulfills all these types and shadows of the law and how truly all the prophecies are fulfilled in Him, the veil will be torn away, and you will be brought out into the full light and liberty of the glory of God. “Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.” And that veil will always remain upon their heart until they turn to God in repentance.

“Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” Observe, it does not simply say, “Nevertheless when they shall turn to the Lord,” but it says, “When *it* shall turn to the Lord.” To what does the “it” refer? Go back to the preceding noun. “Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their *heart*. Nevertheless when *it* shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” That is the end of the parenthetical portion of this section.

Following up what he has already said in verse 6 the apostle concludes the section like this, “Now the Lord is that Spirit.” Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Spirit of the Old Testament. Turn where you will in the Old Testament, it has one theme, and that is Christ. He is the Spirit of the whole thing, and if you just see the letter and do not see Him, you have missed the purpose for which God gave His Book. “The Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The Lord Jesus Christ says, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The law puts man in bondage; Christ brings him out into liberty. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the *[unveiled face]* of the Lord, are changed [the same word is rendered ‘transfigured’ in the Gospels] into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Here is true Christian growth in grace. First, Christ has to be revealed to the soul, and then as you go on day after day, as you are occupied with Christ, you become like Him. You never have to advertise your holiness, you never have to say, “See how spiritual I am becoming, how Christlike I am.” This will not be necessary if your heart is taken up with the Lord Jesus. If occupied with Him, other people will soon realize that you are becoming more and more like Him as the days go by.

You remember Hawthorne’s story of “The Great Stone Face.” He tells of a lad who lived in the village below the mountain, and there upon the mountain was that image of the great stone face, looking down so solemnly, so seriously, upon the people. There was a legend that someday someone was coming to that village who would look just like the great stone face, and he would do some wonderful things for the village and would be the means of great blessing. The story gripped this lad, and he used to slip away and hour after hour would stand looking at

that great stone face and thinking of the story about the one that was coming. Years passed, and that one did not come, and still the young man did what the boy had done, and went to sit and contemplate the majesty, the beauty of that great stone face. By and by youth passed away and middle age came on, and still he could not get rid of that legend; and then old age came, and one day as he walked through the village someone looked at him and exclaimed, "He has come, the one who is like the great stone face!" He became like that which he contemplated. If you want to be Christlike, look at Jesus. If you want to grow in grace, contemplate Jesus. You find Him revealed in the Word, so read your Bible and meditate upon it. We sing the song,

Take time to be holy,
Speak oft with thy Lord.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer almost always interrupts when this hymn is given out, and says, "Please let me change that first line; let us sing it, 'Take time to behold Him.'" As we behold Him we will become holy, for, "we all, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the unveiled face of the Lord, are changed, are transfigured, and transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

LECTURE 7

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

2 Corinthians 4:1–6

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (vv. 1–6)

We have already noticed that this is preeminently the epistle of Christian ministry, and in the section beginning with these verses the apostle undertakes to open up the nature of that ministry and the responsibilities connected with it.

Notice first, it is something that we have received from God. "Seeing," he says, "[that] we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." I know that the gospel is from God because no man would ever have imagined such a message. I am somewhat familiar with most of the religious systems that have occupied the minds of men. For over forty years this subject has been my study above every other. I am not exaggerating when I say that I have read literally thousands of volumes setting forth the different religious views that have prevailed in this world for the last three or four thousand years of human history, and I want to say that you may put them all together, lump them together in one group, and then put the testimony of the Word of God in another by itself. All human religions teach men that there is something they can do and must do whereby they can placate God and earn their own salvation. The gospel, and the gospel alone, tells men that they are utterly helpless, that they can do nothing to merit divine favor, but that they do not need to do anything, for God Himself has come out in loving-kindness in the Person of His Son to save men by grace alone. This is no human thought; this did not come from the human mind; this is a revelation that came from heaven. We have received this ministry, and having received it we are accountable to God to pass it on to others. It was in His mercy that He made it known to us, and we ourselves have been saved through believing it.

Paul could say that there was a time when he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, when he hoped to work out a righteousness of his own, sufficient to admit him uncondemned into the presence of God. But there came a day when God in infinite grace revealed to Saul of Tarsus his own sinfulness and guilt, when he saw himself, not as a self-righteous Pharisee, but as the chief of sinners, and then in his deep, deep need he turned to Christ alone and found in Him a righteousness for his soul. It meant something to him when he said, "We have received this ministry." He was referring to a very definite personal experience that he had gone through. I am wondering whether you know something of that; I wonder whether you have ever been brought by the Spirit of God to see your own innate sinfulness, your guilt, your lost condition, and not only your lost condition but your utter helplessness. I wonder whether God has ever revealed to you His own blessed Son in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9), who came in grace from the heights of glory to the cross of shame and there gave Himself a ransom for all. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). Receiving such mercy, what a responsibility now rests upon you to make it known to others.

The apostle is speaking not merely of what we may call the official ministry of the church, of a man who proclaims the gospel from the public platform, when he says, "As we have received mercy," but every Christian is the object of mercy, and therefore should boldly go forth to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God to others. We are not afraid now, we do not lose heart, as we go to men telling of great grace for great sinners.

On the other hand, the apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of living the gospel. He says, "We have . . . renounced the hidden things of dishonesty." It is not merely an intellectual thing with us. It is not simply that we come to the conclusion, after the process of logical investigation, that Jesus Christ is the divine, eternal Son of God, and confess that as a creedal statement, but we have turned to Him in heart, and turning to Him we have been delivered from our sins, and we have renounced those things in which once we lived, in which once we gloried, the activities of the flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The cross of Christ has brought these things to an end. In other words, the proclaimer of the gospel must himself be a holy man, he must live the truth that he preaches to other people. "We have . . . renounced the hidden things of [shame], not walking in craftiness," not walking in guile, nor hypocrisy. There is nothing that is unreal, nothing that cannot bear the light in our behavior, but there is only that which can have the approval of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Nor handling the word of God deceitfully." Somebody has translated that, "Nor huckstering the Word of God." We go to men and proclaim the gospel and tell them we are doing it for love of their souls. What a sinful thing if, when I profess to proclaim the gospel for love of the souls of men I should, after all, simply be preaching it for love of the money which might come to me, because Christ has said that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel. If I am going to devote all of my time to the preaching of the gospel, it is necessary that I be supported in some way, but if I make that the object, if I go out to preach as though simply performing something for which I am looking for temporal support, then I am a hypocrite and a sham, I am dealing with God's truth as though it were butter and eggs and groceries. The apostle says we are not to do that. Paul might have been a wealthy man if he had pursued the path for which he was trained in early life. He might have been one of the most widely-recognized professors in Judea. He chose to become poverty-stricken in order to go out and preach Christ, and he was even ready to work with his hands making tents, when necessary to support himself and his companions. The preaching of the gospel was a commission given to him by the risen, glorified Lord, and he could say, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

“Nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” I know it is possible to preach the gospel and to say things that are perfectly true, and yet the life that is behind the speaking be contrary to the message delivered. In a case like that there is no real power. The power of the Word is found when a man is walking with God in communion with the Holy Spirit. I have prayed thousands of times, and I dare to pray again, knowing that God may take me at my word if I fail, “O God, keep me from ever being able to preach the gospel without a clear conscience and the power of the Holy Spirit.” To attempt to do it is but to mock God, and to mock men for whom Christ died. “By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

The remarkable thing is that one can preach this gospel and yet not have men understand it; it does not seem to appeal to them. In the third chapter we read that when Moses is read there are certain ones who are blinded, and they cannot see that he speaks of Christ. But the same thing is true in the New Testament. You can preach it, men may sit down over the New Testament and read it carefully, and still it seems hazy, it seems that there is a veil over it. How do you account for that? Is the gospel then no clearer than the message of the Old Testament? How do you account for the apparent veil that hangs over the hearts of men as they read or hear the gospel? He explains it for us by saying, “If our gospel be hid [or veiled], it is [veiled] to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” The god of this world, or the god of this age, is Satan. That is a wonderful expression to use of him. The Lord Jesus called him the “prince of this world,” and now the apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit goes farther and calls him the “god of this age.” The Devil is the only god that Christless men know; they are led by the Devil captive to his will. There are men who even deny his existence, but the very fact that they refuse the gospel message shows that they are under his power. “If our gospel be [veiled], it is [veiled] to them that are lost.” Do you say, “I do not understand; I have heard this all my life, but it means nothing to me; I have heard those words over and over and over again, but they do not register with me, they do not mean anything to me”? Is that true of you? Then let me tell you seriously, tenderly, earnestly, the reason that you are lost, lost deliberately, willfully, is because of your own sin. That is why you cannot see nor apprehend the beauty, the preciousness of the gospel. “If our gospel be [veiled], it is [veiled] to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” It is Satan that holds you in his control.

The reason you cannot believe is that you do not want to believe. If you would believe, it would mean the judging of those things in your life that are contrary to the Word of God. If any man says, "There are things in the Bible that I cannot believe," I can tell him why. It is because there are things in his life that the Bible condemns, of which he does not wish to repent. There are sins that mean more to him than Christ. He would rather indulge in them than be delivered from them. The moment a man comes to the place where he desires God's will above all else, and says, "I am ready to renounce my sin, to be freed from it," that man will not have any trouble believing the gospel. Judge yourself in the presence of God, and you will be able to believe Him. Face your sins before God, and there will be no difficulty about believing.

Someone said to Sir Isaac Newton, "Sir Isaac, I do not understand; you seem to be able to believe the Bible like a little child. I have tried, but I cannot. So many of its statements mean nothing to me. I cannot believe; I cannot understand."

Sir Isaac Newton replied, "Sometimes I come into my study and in my absent-mindedness I attempt to light my candle when the extinguisher is over it, and I fumble about trying to light it and cannot; but when I remove the extinguisher then I am able to light the candle. I am afraid the extinguisher in your case is the love of your sins; it is deliberate unbelief that is in you. Turn to God in repentance; be prepared to let the Spirit of God reveal His truth to you, and it will be His joy to show the glory of the grace of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ."

Those who believe not do not desire this knowledge, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." It says in our King James Version, "The glorious gospel." That is precious, but it does not really give us the whole truth. It is not only that the gospel is in itself glorious, but the gospel that we preach is not a gospel of earth but it is the gospel of the glory of Christ. Christ is up there in glory at God's right hand, and from the risen, glorified Christ comes this message of reconciliation to sinful men. That is why the apostle speaks of it in the way he does. Christ is the image of God, the manifestation of God. How Satan wants to keep men from coming into this place, and how God is yearning to have men know Him as revealed in His Son.

The gospel is not just a philosophy. What are men's philosophies after all? Philosophy is the acting of mind upon mind, trying to explain things in a logical, reasonable, human way, and the stronger the mind of the speaker the more it impresses other people, and brings them to think as he thinks. Men depend upon logic, rhetoric, and eloquence in order to impress their fellows. But it was not so with the apostle Paul. He was afraid that mere human reason might

overrule the power of the gospel, and so said, “Not with wisdom of words” (1 Cor. 1:17). Men like to hear lovely figures of speech expressed in beautiful language, but the business of the gospel preacher is not simply to reach the mind of man but to reach his conscience and his will, and when man’s conscience is exercised and his will is turned toward God, then his soul is saved through faith in Christ. But this is not the result of human effort, this is the work of the Holy Spirit, and that is why the servant of Christ needs to put his dependence entirely upon the Spirit of God.

Notice how the apostle closes this section. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” He could not say in plainer words, “We are not trying to attract attention to ourselves, we do not want the result of our ministry to be that men will go about and say, ‘What a wonderful preacher Paul is! What an eloquent man is Apollos! What a marvelous exhorter is Simon Peter! How wonderful these men are!’” I have often felt ashamed at the foolish things well-meaning men have said in introducing servants of Christ to an audience. They make so much of the man, they have so much to say about his ability and his accomplishments, when it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that he can do anything at all. We should never forget that it is the Savior who counts, and the Word that God uses in the power of the Holy Spirit. So Paul says, “We preach not ourselves,” we do not want to attract attention to ourselves. Like John the Baptist we say, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). “We preach . . . Christ Jesus the Lord,” and it is only as He is exalted that men and women are blessed. It is only as He is exalted that sinners are saved. But what of the preacher? “Ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” That is all; just “your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Away back there in the beginning God looked upon a world of chaos wrapped in night, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep, and God said, “Let there be light, and there was light,” and He who “commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” This is our ministry, to bring all men to see the beauty of Christ, to see that, “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9), that He is indeed the light of life.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 “I am this dark world’s Light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
 And all thy days be bright”
I looked to Jesus, and I found
 In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I’ll walk,
 Till traveling days are done.

Have you seen “the glory of God in the face of Jesus”?

LECTURE 8

PRESENT TRIAL AND FUTURE GLORY

2 Corinthians 4:6–18

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many

redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (vv. 6–18)

The verse with which we began our reading links very clearly with the first chapter of the book of Genesis. You remember we read, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Some people imagine that we who are generally dubbed “fundamentalists” believe that that took place at about 10 o’clock in the morning in the year 4004 B.C. We do not believe anything of the kind. I have never yet met a fundamentalist who had any such crude conception of the time of creation.

What we do believe is that whenever creation took place, no matter how many millions or billions of years back, it was God who brought everything into existence—“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” We do not know the exact condition of the earth at that time, except that we are told in Isaiah 45:18 that “he created it not in *vain* [or void], he formed it to be inhabited.” The earth, as God originally created it, was absolutely perfect, but the second verse of Genesis tells us that “the earth [became] without form, and void.” Something happened to that first creation; there was a fall, some great catastrophe happened, and so we have the condition depicted in that second verse. Therefore God began to work again in order to fit up this earth that it might be the stage upon which would be played the wondrous drama of redemption.

We are told that, “The Spirit of God brooded over the face of the deep. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” Notice two things: the Spirit of God brooded—God spoke. “The entrance of thy words giveth light” (Ps. 119:130). We think of man as in very much the same condition as at that fall. “God hath made man upright” (Eccl. 7:29), but he fell and lost the robe of glory. We say, “Necessity is the mother of invention,” and the first invention was that of the fig-leaf apron. Realizing his nakedness Adam made for himself an apron of fig-leaves. Through sin man fell into this chaotic condition, but God was going to work in order to lift him out of it. Man is in darkness, he is lost and wretched, and in redeeming him two great things are involved: first, the brooding of the Holy Spirit over the soul of man, for no man has ever been saved apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The second thing is the message of the gospel.

“God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” And here we read, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” And so we to whom that light has come, we who have believed the gospel message, have been brought out of nature’s darkness into this marvelous light of God, through the gospel.

The apostle now shows that we are entrusted with this message, to carry it to poor, lost men and women. We ourselves are just feeble, sinful creatures, not perfect by any means, but having a perfect Savior to proclaim and perfect salvation to preach. And so he says, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels [he means our bodies], that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” I think you can see that the reference here is to the battle in the days of Gideon when his little army of three hundred surrounded the great camp of the Midianites. To every one of those soldiers had been entrusted an earthen vessel, and in that vessel was a light, a lamp of some kind. Gideon told the soldiers to surround the camp and to do whatever he did, and so at a given time he cried, “The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon,” and he broke the earthen vessel and the light shone out. The moment he did that, all the others did the same thing, and the Midianites sprang to their feet and thought there must be a tremendous army surrounding them. They felt there was no hope, and in their distress in the darkness they began to kill each other, and so Gideon’s army was victorious. It was a great victory won in a peculiar way. That is what every Christian is, an earthen vessel with a light in it. To you and to me there has been committed the glorious light of the gospel. We were once in darkness but are now in the light of the Lord. In order for a light to shine out of a vessel it has to be broken. Do you know why some people who know the gospel intellectually never win a soul to Christ? It is because the earthen vessel has never been broken, they have never been humbled and cast down in the presence of God. One may know all about the way of life and yet never communicate light to others, because that one has never been broken in the presence of God. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” The vessel has nothing to boast of; it is the light that accomplishes everything.

The apostle is thinking particularly of himself and his fellow workmen when he says, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.” We to whom has been committed the glorious ministry of the gospel, realize that we are to expect trouble. “We are perplexed,” often we hardly know which way to turn. But we are not in despair because we are assured that our blessed Master understands, and we are waiting word from Him. “Persecuted, but not forsaken.”

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Saviour too,
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not like them untrue.

“In the world,” says the Lord Jesus, “ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Our risen, glorified, triumphant Savior backs up every one of His persecuted, suffering people. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” That simply means that we who are Christians are daily delivered over to death; that is, the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ is being made manifest in our daily lives. The Lord Jesus says, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). If you had been living in the days when the Lord uttered those words, and you had seen a company of soldiers coming down the road, and a man in the midst bearing a cross on his shoulders, you would have said, “That man is going out to death.” Very well, “That is the place I want you to take for Me,” our Lord is saying. “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:39). Take that place for Me, take the cross and follow Me. No matter what comes you are simply to be yielded, even to death, in order to glorify Me. That is what we glory in. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” Elsewhere the apostle says, “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31). I wonder if any servant of Christ has ever suffered and endured more than the apostle Paul. But he gloried in it all because as he suffered for Jesus’ sake, the life of Jesus was being made manifest in his mortal body. Men could look at him and say, That is the way Christ would have us live. And so you and I are called upon to manifest the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” He is speaking, you see, as a servant of Christ who had been broken in order that the light might shine, in order to illuminate the darkened hearts of those Corinthians. We have been given up to tribulation, trial, and persecution that the light may shine through us to a lost world. That was so with the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24), and the same principle applies in regard to His servants. If you want to be of use to the Lord Jesus Christ, you must be prepared to take the place of death.

It was Arthur T. Pierson, I believe, who when visiting George Müller asked him, “Mr. Müller, would you be willing to tell me the secret of your great work and the wonderful things that God has done through you?”

Mr. Müller looked up for a moment, and then bowed his head lower and lower until it was down between his knees, and he was silent a moment or two, and then said, “Many years ago there came a day in my life when George Müller died. As a young man I had a great many ambitions, but there came a day when I died to all these things, and I said, ‘Henceforth, Lord Jesus, not my will but thine,’ and from that day God began to work in and through me.”

General Booth expressed it in a different way. J. Wilbur Chapman said to him, “Will you tell me the secret of the great work that you have accomplished?”

He said, in his straightforward way, as he looked right into the face of Doctor Chapman with that eagle eye of his, “Dr. Chapman, when I was a lad of seventeen, I determined that God should have all there was of William Booth.”

That is it! When I come to the place where I am through with my own ambitions, when I can say, “None of self, but all of Thee,” I understand what Paul means when he talks about “Bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.”

“So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.” No man can live the life that Paul speaks of unless he has by faith seen the Lord Jesus Christ, the risen One up yonder. Who would want to identify himself with a dead Christ? But Christ has been raised again, and believing we speak of the mighty triumph of faith.

“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Notice the many striking contrasts in these verses. First observe the contrast between perishing and being renewed. “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” The outward man perishes. How well we know that! What is the outward man? It is the physical man, the body, and many of us realize that the outward man is perishing. There is not the elasticity in the step that there used to be, there is not the physical vigor that there once was. We tire a great deal more easily than we did some years ago. We do not remember things as well as we once did. And some of

us have noticed a very strange thing about memory. We can recall very vividly things that happened away back in our early years; we remember the little incidents of childhood days, we remember the people who were kind to us in those days, and some of us have never gotten over the remembrance of those who were very unkind to us. We remember very vividly the experiences of our early school days and many of our early spiritual experiences, the time when God spoke to our young hearts, the exercises we went through, and then the moment of decision when we accepted Christ. These things we remember very well, but have a great deal of difficulty remembering what happened yesterday. We even go home from a meeting and someone says, "Was it a good sermon?"

And we say, "I think it was; yes, reasonably so."

"Well, what was the text?"

"Well, I declare, I forget," and we cannot call it back. Memory plays all kinds of queer tricks on us. Yes, the outward man is perishing, but "the inward man is renewed day by day."

The inward man is the spirit, the soul, the real man, regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. The body gets weaker and weaker, but the inward man gets stronger and stronger. The nearer we get to heaven, the more real the precious things of the Lord become to us. I think Bunyan's picture is a very lovely one. He saw the aged saints lying on the shores of the river of life in the land of Beulah, and they could get glimpses every now and then of the glory of the celestial city. At times they could actually see the shining ones from the other side, and at others they thought they could even hear the voices of the saints and their songs of praise. I think the aged know much of that. God's saints who have lived for Him through the years, and now have gotten very close to the end of this life, already seem to get the sounds and sights from the celestial city yonder to which they are going; and be assured that these things will become more and more real to you the closer you get to the end. "At eventide, it shall be light."

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Here again we see a vivid contrast; first, the contrast between affliction and glory. You have known much of affliction as you have gone along the way. You have not lived your life without knowing a great many trials and afflictions; you have not failed to know suffering and bereavement and disappointment. There are times when the tears will flow. But now God puts in contrast to the affliction which you have known down here the glory that is coming by-and-by, and if the affliction has oppressed your heart, how the glory will overwhelm you when you are at home with Christ.

He speaks of the affliction as “light affliction,” but of the glory as a “weight” of glory. You have sometimes felt as though your affliction was very heavy, but it has no real weight at all in comparison with the glory that is coming. Therefore, if the affliction seems to have been very heavy when God calls it light, you can get some idea of the glory that awaits us. He says, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment.” It does not seem as though it has been just “for a moment.” I was talking to a dear saint who for over twenty years had been sitting in a wheelchair, and I said, “It is good to know that the Lord is coming, and then all this trouble will be over.”

“Oh, yes,” she said, “but it is so long, it has lasted so long. I wonder when it ever will come to an end.”

It seemed a long time, yet he says it is but for a moment. Suppose that one had spent his whole lifetime in this world in affliction and had lived to be seventy, eighty, or ninety years of age; after all, what is that compared with eternity? “We spend our years as a tale that is told” (Ps. 90:9). Our years pass as “a watch in the night” (Ps. 90:4). “Our light affliction . . . is but for a moment.”

But notice what awaits us on the other side. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” How strongly he puts that! It gives some conception of what is coming, what it will be by-and-by, when earth’s trials are past and we are at last in the glory with the Lord Jesus.

In the meantime, “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” We are not to be occupied with present things that we see, but we should seek to be occupied with the things that are not seen, for they are, after all, the real things, the eternal things. The things that no human eye has seen are the things that are lasting. When everything that the eye looks upon will have vanished, we shall have Christ, we shall have heaven, we shall have the Holy Spirit, we shall have the love of the Father, we shall have communion with the people of God for all eternity, when earth’s vain shadows have passed away.

LECTURE 9

THE STATE OF THE BELIEVER BETWEEN DEATH AND RESURRECTION

2 Corinthians 5:1–8

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is *from heaven*: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (vv. 1–8)

In any discussion of the state of the believer between death and resurrection it is absolutely necessary, if we are to be at all intelligent as to it, to realize something of the truth of these verses. The first thing that we need to have clear in our minds is that there is an outward man and an inward man. The two are not to be confounded. There are materialists of different stripes who insist that the only man there is is the man that we can see from day to day, and that when death comes the entire man is laid away in the tomb, as some think, to remain in an unconscious sleep until the day of resurrection. But when we turn to the Word of God we do not find any such confusion of the outward with the inward man. The outward man is the physical man, the man that we see with the natural eye; the inward man is the man who dwells within this body, and that man we cannot see. I look over a great audience and I can see thousands of human forms, but I cannot see the inward man in any instance; I see only the outward. As you look up to the platform and see those of us standing or seated here, you are looking only at the tabernacles, the tabernacles of flesh in which we live.

You cannot really see us, for spirit is invisible to the natural eye. "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." God is Spirit, and yet God is real. He "maketh his angels spirits" (Ps. 104:4), and yet angels are real. God is a Person; angels are personalities, and you and I are spirit personalities living for a little while in mortal bodies. But now see what we are told in the opening verses of this fifth chapter.

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved [that is, if this tenement of clay, this physical body passes away, even though it goes back to its native element, as is so often the case after being put away in the grave, if that should take place], we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Notice the distinction in every instance between ourselves and the houses in which we now live. Our earthly house is dissolving. Today I am looking into the faces of many who are growing old. It is a wonderful thing to grow old in Christ. Personally, I rejoice in every year that goes by. People say sometimes, "I don't like getting old." To be perfectly frank, I do, because I feel that every passing year is bringing me nearer the glory land, every passing year is bringing me nearer the time when I shall see the face of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me. Then too every passing year means just so much less conflict with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and you know the Christian life is a conflict. How many temptations we have had to face! At times we have yielded, and other times through grace we have been enabled to overcome, but what a wonderful thing it will be when there is no more conflict, and no possibility of failure.

The old house is breaking down; with some of us the roof is thatched now with white hair, and we are reminded that day by day we shall soon move out unless Christ Himself returns. But we are not disheartened, we are not discouraged, for "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." My hope is brighter now than it ever was; my joy in Christ is greater than it has ever been; the world means less to me today than it has ever meant, and the applause of men means less. But the approval of the Lord means more than it has ever meant. I do not feel that I am getting old, it is just the body, the outward man that is perishing, just the old house that is breaking down. I am just as certain that I "have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," awaiting me, as I am that I am living in this tenement of clay, and that body will be like the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not enter that new body the moment I die. Some have thought that this Scripture teaches that when we leave this world we find awaiting us in heaven a body that serves us between death and resurrection, and then in resurrection we shall have a glorified body that takes the place of this intermediate body. But the verse itself contradicts that thought. It says this house not made with hands abides "*eternal* in the heavens." Between death and resurrection we pass out of the body and our pure spirits enter into the presence of the Lord.

"In this we groan." That is a Scripture I do not have to expound to you. You live it out; you know what it is to groan. There are many things to make us do so. Some of us used to groan in the bondage of sin, but though delivered from that, we are still groaning as we wait for a resurrection body. There are so many aches and pains and sorrows and sufferings. "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." That is, we are yearning for the time when we shall have our new body, we are looking forward to resurrection or change at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him.

But mark, even resurrection will not be a blessing if we are not robed in divine righteousness. And so the apostle puts in a word here lest people take it for granted that resurrection means salvation, for there shall be a "resurrection . . . both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). "They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29). And so he speaks of resurrection as a "clothing upon." "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." Writing to the church at Laodicea, where a great many who professed the name of the Lord were not really born again, the Savior says, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and

miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). What a solemn thing it would be to stand before God as one risen from the dead and yet spiritually naked in His presence. You say, "Where can we find clothing suitable for the eyes of God?" It is that which He Himself provides. Isaiah says, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10). And so in that day when we are raised from the dead or are changed by power divine, if we live to greet Him when He returns, we who have trusted Christ shall not be found naked, we shall be clothed in the righteousness of God.

"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed," we are not earnestly desiring to die, for that would not be a natural thing for any Christian. The Christian should not earnestly desire to die, and yet should be prepared for it, but he should also be prepared to live for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). And then he says that he would rather live to be a help and blessing to other people. And so we hope "not for that we would be unclothed," but we do long to be "clothed upon." That is, we would like to live to the second coming of our Lord Jesus to get our resurrection body in that wonderful hour of His triumph, "that mortality might be swallowed up of life." And whether we live or die this is the final goal.

"Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." It is a settled thing with God that someday we are going to have glorified bodies, and as proof of this He has already given us His blessed Holy Spirit to dwell within us, and He is the earnest of the joy that shall be ours by-and-by when we gather in His presence in the Father's house. Because of this assurance, "We are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." We have no doubt as we think of any eventuality, whether living until Christ comes or dying. Notice that expression, "At home in the body." I (the real I) am living in this body; the body is my house, my temporary house. I am at home in the body but I am absent from the Lord. He is up there in the glory. True, He has given me His Holy Spirit, as we have just seen, and by Him He dwells within me, but actually I am absent from the Lord. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." We take His word for it—faith is taking God at His word. We are living in the body, and are absent from the Lord, but, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." It will be even more blessed for us to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Here then in one verse we have summed up for us the believer's state between death

and resurrection. When death comes for the Christian, in that moment the believer is absent from the body and at home with Christ.

Observe, he does not go to sleep in the body. The "soul-sleepers" insist that in the hour of death the believer becomes absolutely unconscious and knows nothing until the resurrection. You may ask, "But has he not Scripture for that? Does not the Bible speak of those that 'sleep in Jesus?' Does it not say, 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed' (1 Cor. 15:51)? Is not sleep unconsciousness?" Yes, for the body; it is the body that sleeps; but you see, when my body falls asleep in Jesus, I leave the body. "Oh," you say, "I cannot understand that." "We walk by faith, not by sight." Faith believes the Book, and it says, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Notice how the apostle Paul speaks of this in the first chapter of Philippians. Here we see Paul in prison in Rome, waiting to be summoned before Nero, and he does not know what the outcome will be, whether he will be put to death or set free, and he writes to the Philippian friends and practically says, "Even if it were put up to me to choose, I do not know which I would desire, whether to die a martyr's death or live a little longer"; but as he meditates upon it he says, "I really believe I would rather live a little longer and preach Christ to people." "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Phil. 1:20). Is not that a lovely expression? I want Christ to be made large in my life; I do not want people to think a great deal of Paul but of Christ. I want to be used of God to make Christ seem great in the eyes of men and women, that "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." If I can glorify Christ better by living I want to live; if I can glorify Him better by dying I want to die. The only thing is, I want Christ to loom large in the eyes of people for whom He died. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (v. 21). There is only one reason to live, and that is to glorify Jesus, and then if I die I will go to be with Jesus, so that will be better. "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (vv. 22-24). You cannot attach the thought of soul-sleep to that. If Paul thought of death as unconsciousness until the resurrection hour, he would have been in no dilemma. He would have said, "Since death is unconsciousness, I want to live as long as I can in order to preach Christ," but he says, "No, it would be better to die because it would mean to be with Christ."

How did he know it would be far better? Well, you say, he was an inspired apostle and the Lord revealed it to him. That is true, but there is more than that.

The apostle Paul at one time had been permitted to have a certain experience which proved to him beyond the shadow of a doubt that it is far better to be with Christ in heaven than to live for Him on earth. People often say, "We do not know anything about heaven. Nobody has ever come back to tell us what it is like." But they are overlooking something. Our Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven, and He says, "In my Father's house are many mansions [or abiding places]." Who are in those resting-places? All the saints who have gone on thus far. They are over yonder in the Father's house. And then we have the testimony of this very man, the apostle Paul, for when we turn to the twelfth chapter of this epistle, we find him relating for us a most remarkable experience which he passed through. When he went through this experience he was not conscious as to whether he was in the body or out of it. That is very interesting. Take our beloved friends who have died in Christ. We may sometimes think of them as in a very imperfect condition if their spirits are in heaven without the body, but Paul says, "If I was in the body I didn't know it, and if I was out of it I didn't miss it." So our dear friends over yonder do not miss their bodies; they are perfectly intelligent and perfectly happy; they are really people even if out of the body. They are in heaven, in the royal garden, in paradise. They hear unspeakable things which it is not possible for a man to utter. Are they able to commune one with another? Oh, yes. Our blessed Lord has told us, even before the work of the cross was accomplished, of that rich man in hades, who looked across the great gulf and saw Lazarus and talked with Abraham, and among the lost the rich man was a personality, never to be rich again but to be poor. We read of "spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). What communion they have with each other over there! But the best of all is that they are with Christ.

LECTURE 10

PAUL'S THREE IMPELLING MOTIVES

2 Corinthians 5:9–14

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us. (vv. 9–14)

In this section of the epistle the apostle Paul brings before us the three great motives that moved his heart as he went about through the world proclaiming the gospel of Christ. The first is this: He ever had it before his mind that all his work must soon be tested at the judgment seat of Christ. What a solemn reflection it is for a Christian to remember that everything he says and everything he

does as a believer is someday going to be examined by the Lord Jesus, and he will be rewarded accordingly! This, of course, is an altogether different thing from the Christless soul standing before the Great White Throne to be judged for his sins. The judgment seat of Christ refers to that review which will take place when our blessed Lord returns again and gathers all His own before Himself. He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). The Son of Man is like one who has gone into a far country, but has left to his servants certain responsibilities and given them certain talents, and says, "Occupy till I come." Then when He returns again He is going to examine all their work, and reward everything that was the result of His Holy Spirit's control over their lives.

Notice the way the apostle puts it here. "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." This word translated "labor" really means "are ambitious." It might be translated, "Wherefore we [are ambitious], that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." The apostle uses this same word in two other places in his letters. In one instance he tells us that he is ambitious not to build on another man's foundation, but to preach the gospel in the regions beyond, a most worthy ambition. He was a true missionary. And then again, writing to the Thessalonian saints, he exhorts them to study to be quiet and to do their own business. That may be translated, "Be ambitious to mind your own business." That is a wonderful ambition. So many are ambitious to mind other folks' business that they do not have time for their own. "We [are ambitious], that, whether present or absent"—those words refer back to the first part of this chapter where we read, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Now he says, "We [are ambitious] that whether present in the body or whether with the Lord, whether we live or die, that we should be accepted of Him."

In the epistle to the Ephesians he tells us that God has made us "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). As believers we are all accepted *in* Christ, but here we find that he is urgently desirous of being accepted *of* Christ. Notice the difference. Accepted *in* Him—that is my standing. God sees me in Him, and Christ Jesus is made unto me wisdom, even righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is my perfection. I am complete in Him. But now I who already am complete in Him, who already have been accepted in Him, am to be exercised about being accepted *of* Him. Accepted *of* Him really means being well-pleasing to Him. You see, accepted *in* Him is my standing, accepted *of* Him has to do with my state. I wonder whether this is our ambition. Let us search our hearts and ask what our ambition really is. Is it to excel in some particular line for

which you feel you are specially adapted? Is it to be thought well of by men and women like yourself? Or is it to be well-pleasing to the Lord, to have His approval?

I remember very well hearing Dr. G. Campbell Morgan say that a great crisis came into his life when he first gave up his place as a schoolmaster to become a minister of Christ. It was a very solemn moment when he was set apart to the work of the Lord, and when he got home that night and went into his room, he fell down on his knees before God, and he was sure he could hear the Lord saying to him, "Now, Morgan, you have been set apart definitely for the ministry of the Word. Do you want to be a great preacher, or do you want to be My servant?" His first thought was, "Oh, I want to be a great preacher; surely there is no more laudable ambition than that." But why should the Lord put it that way—"Do you want to be a great preacher, or do you want to be My servant?" And he said, "Why can I not be His servant, and a great preacher?" He went through a time of real soul-struggle, and then the thought came that it might be in the will of God that as a servant of Christ his ministry should be a very obscure one, and he cried, "O blessed Lord, I would rather be Thy servant than anything else!" And God not only made him His servant but a great preacher. Sometimes we fulfill our deepest ambition by foregoing our own desires and saying, "Lord, I want to be Thy servant; just take me, make me, break me, do what Thou wilt with me." You remember that through Jeremiah the Lord said to Baruch: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not" (Jer. 45:5). So He says to every one of us, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." But what should we seek? To be well-pleasing unto Him, so that whatever niche He calls upon us to fill we may fill it to His glory, and this in view of the judgment seat.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Have you ever as a Christian stopped to think of what a solemn thing it will be when your life's work is ended, when all further opportunity for witnessing for Christ on earth will have gone by forever, when you stand in your glorified body before His judgment seat, and He will go back over all the way you have come, and will give His own estimate of all your service, of everything you have ever attempted to do for Him? Will He have to say at such a time, "You had a very wonderful opportunity to glorify Me, but you failed because you were so self-occupied, you were so much concerned about what people would think of you, instead of being concerned about pleasing Me; I will have to blot all that out, I cannot reward you for that, for there was too much self in that

service"? And then He will point to something else, maybe something you had forgotten altogether, and He will say, "There! You thought you failed in that; didn't you? You really thought you blundered so dreadfully that your whole testimony amounted to nothing, but I was listening and observing, and I knew that in that hour of weakness your one desire was to glorify Me, and though nobody applauded you I took note of it and will reward you for it." What a joy it will be to receive His approval in that day. If we learn to live as Paul did with the judgment seat of Christ before us, we will not be men-pleasers, but we will be Christ-pleasers.

Notice the next motive that stirred the apostle's heart to Christian endeavor. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." This, I think, is a forgotten note in modern preaching in many places. "The terror of the Lord." Is there anything in God to be afraid of? Away back in the 1870s Theodore Parker preached a sermon that was widely published titled, "There Is Nothing in God to Fear," and in some way or another that false note that he struck at that time went all over this land, and more or less had its influence upon thousands of preachers who read that eloquent sermon, and men came to the conclusion that there was nothing in God to fear, and so dropped the doctrine of eternal punishment for impenitent sinners. They forgot that the Bible said, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31), and substituted a rosewater gospel of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, instead of the stern reality set forth in this Book. But there is something in God to fear, something that the Christless man may well fear, and that is God's hatred of iniquity. God is of purer eyes than to look upon sin; He cannot but judge iniquity. And so the apostle said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." As he thought of Christians having to answer for their behavior at the judgment seat of Christ it at once brought home to his heart what a solemn thing it would be for unsaved men to face their sins at the great white throne. The apostle Peter says, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17-18). If our blessed Lord does not overlook one thing in the lives of His beloved people, but if everything is coming into the light in that day, what will it be for Christless men to have all their sins made manifest at His judgment bar, and to meet a just and awful doom? As Paul went out to this poor Christless world he realized he was going to men that were lost, not merely in danger of being lost someday, but lost

here and now in this life. But he had a gospel for lost men, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), and so he went to men with Christ. He did not go out to glorify himself or to get a certain reputation among men.

He says, "We commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart." When you find men who profess to be servants of Christ glorying in outward appearance, Paul says, you can contrast our behavior with theirs—we are made the very offscouring of the earth for Christ's sake and are not seeking man's applause, we are seeking the approval of the Lord Jesus Christ. There were those who said of Paul, "The man is insane; it is not natural that any man should be actuated by such motives as these; it is not natural for a man to live a life such as this." Very well, he says, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." We are not even concerned about insisting that we are sane; we are not even concerned about insisting that our words are words of sobriety; we leave that to God to judge. We proclaim the message in dependence on the Holy Spirit, and are not concerned at all about man's approval or disapproval. Our business is to glorify Christ and to seek to save the lost. This is the ideal preacher of the Word. I never read words like these but I feel so condemned in my own conscience that I hardly know how to talk to other people. I can detect in my own heart so much pride, so much human ambition, so much selfishness, so much that is different from what was found in the Lord Jesus Christ, that I have to bow before Him and tell Him I am so unworthy to be His servant, and yet to plead with Him for Jesus' sake to use one, even though unworthy, who at least has some little desire to see poor sinners brought to a saving knowledge of God's beloved Son.

It is always comforting to know that everything that God has done in this world, He has done through imperfect instruments. He has never had a perfect instrument. I do not think of Jesus as an instrument, He was God—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19)—but I am thinking of His prophets, His preachers, pastors, evangelists, teachers, apostles; they are all imperfect. A Peter denied his Lord, even a John and a James were ambitious to sit one on the right hand and one on the left hand of the Lord in His kingdom, and a Paul made a mistake at the last and insisted on going up to Jerusalem against the voice of the Spirit. Even the best of God's servants have failed, and yet how gracious of Him to use them. He uses the message they bring, the truth they proclaim. He will deal with His servants Himself about their failure, but He will use the message when Christ is lifted up.

Now notice the last of these three impelling motives. Paul says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." I stop here in the middle of a sentence, for these words in themselves are enough; they complete our theme. What are Paul's three impelling motives? First, a realization of the fact that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ; second, a recognition of the fact that men are lost and exposed to the judgment of God; and third, the love of Christ constraining, that all-conquering love that laid hold of the heart of proud, haughty, self-righteous, cruel Saul of Tarsus, that religious zealot who went forth with a heart filled with hatred for the name of Jesus, seeking to bind those that loved Him, to cast them in prison and compel them to blaspheme, in fact to put them to death if they did not renounce Christ. There he was, hastening on to Damascus with no thought in his soul that the time would ever come when he would be the greatest preacher of the gospel which he was then seeking to destroy, that this world should ever know. He fell to the ground, a light brighter than the sun shone round about him, and he heard a voice from the glory exclaiming in sweet accents, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And trembling and astonished he exclaimed, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the answer came back, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:14-18). And in that one glorious moment the darkness disappeared from Saul's heart, the veil was torn away, his eyes were opened, Christ filled the vision of his soul, and henceforth he could say, "The love of Christ; constraineth me." That is what made him the man that he was, actuated, motivated by divine love. Do you know that love? Have you too been laid hold of by the love of Christ? Then may you go forth to make Him known to others.

LECTURE 11

WHY CHRIST DIED

2 Corinthians 5:14–21

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (vv. 14–21)

In this section of the epistle Paul brings before us in a very clear, definite way, the supreme reason for the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see not merely One who loved God His Father and loved the truth, and was therefore willing to die as a martyr for truth, but we see One who took His place as a vicarious sacrifice, suffering instead of others, bearing the judgment that sinners deserved in order that they might be delivered from that judgment, and that they might be brought into a new creation, a new relationship with God altogether, and then might go forth with hearts aflame with love for Christ to carry the story of His grace to all men everywhere. This is the way that Christianity has been propagated down through the centuries. Islam was propagated by the sword. Its advocates said, "Accept the religion of Mohammed or die." Other systems have been advanced by appeal to selfish interests. But Christianity has been propagated down through all the centuries in the power of the Holy Spirit, through the setting forth of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, calling upon men through Christ to be reconciled to God, and what marvels this gospel has wrought!

The apostle says, "The love of Christ constraineth us." Spurred on by his own sense of that mighty, all-conquering love, he went out into a world of sinners to win men for Christ, "because," he tells us, "we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." That is, mankind as a whole was under sentence of death, that came in with the fall of the first man. Adam stood there before God as our federal head. He was the head of the old creation, and that old creation was on trial in Adam. God said to him, "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof [dying thou shalt die]" (Gen. 2:17). Adam deliberately disobeyed this command of God, and he fell under sentence of death, and of course took the entire human race down with him, for all were represented in him as he stood before God. And so all mankind now are in the place of death.

I have sometimes tried to illustrate it like this. Think of the top of this reading desk as representing paradise, that place in which God put man when He first created him. This hymn book which I hold erect on the desk may speak to you of Adam as the head of the race. There our first father stood in the position of responsibility before God, a sinless man in Eden. Had he been obedient, he would never have come under the sentence of death, but through disobedience he fell under that sentence. Sinning against God he went down into the place of death; just as I drop this book from the top of the reading desk to the platform, you may think of Adam falling from that place of sinlessness, where he was free of all condemnation, down into the place of death because of sin. And mark, every person who has ever come into the world since, has come into the world

down there in the place of death. Not one has come into the world up here on this plane of sinlessness. Therefore, all are dead, as God looks at men, dead in trespasses and sin. But now think of our Lord Jesus Christ. He comes into the world as the sinless One; He stands not only on the plane where Adam was, the plane of innocence, but He is absolutely holy. But He has come to save men. He cannot find any men on this plane of sinlessness; He does not find men enjoying life and fellowship with God. Where does He have to go to find them? He goes down into the place of death where man is. "And that he died for all." Because men were dead He went down into death, and now He brings believers up with Him in resurrection life. To put them here on the same plane where Adam was before he fell? Oh, no, to lift them infinitely higher, that they may be made members of a new creation of which He is the exalted Head in heaven: "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).

"If [Christ] died for all, then were all dead." No man has title to life in himself, but Christ died for all "that they which live," those who have put their trust in Him, those to whom He has spoken life, now possessors of eternal life through faith, "should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Why did Christ die? Not only that we should be delivered from death and judgment, but that we should be brought up from our state of death into newness of life. Now our redeemed lives should be devoted to Him that we should live henceforth to the glory of God alone. And so we now look out upon the world through altogether different eyes from those we used when we belonged to it. When men of the world, we made much of the flesh and all that was linked with it. We thought of men as great, or as rich, or as powerful, talented or able, as superior one to another. Some men we despised because they were poor and ignorant and degraded, with little intelligence, and less talented, but now all that is changed. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." We look out now upon this world, not thinking of the different distinctions between man and man, but as seeing a world of sinners for whom Christ died, and we realize that all men, whether rich or poor, foolish or wise, whether barbarian or civilized, whether morons or highly talented, are dear to the heart of God, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). So, in touch with Christ Himself, we are prepared to suffer, to give, to deny ourselves, we are prepared to die, if need be, in order to bring others to a saving knowledge of this redemption which means so much to us.

"Yea," the apostle continues, "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." He is not saying that he personally ever did know Christ after the flesh, but uses the "we" here in order to take in others with him who were actually acquainted with our Lord when here on earth. He is telling us that it is not the incarnate Christ with whom we are linked, it is the resurrected Christ. Incarnation apart from His death would never have saved one poor sinner. We do not think of Him merely as the promised Messiah of Israel, as a great prophet sent of God, as the greatest of all ethical and spiritual teachers, but look far beyond the cross and the grave into the glory, and see Him there exalted at God's right hand, a Prince and a Savior, and we go to men in His name to proclaim remission of sins, knowing that when they trust Him, when they believe the message, "If any man be in Christ, [it] is . . . new creation." He, the risen, exalted Christ, has now become the Head of an altogether new creation. Who belong to that new creation? All who, though once in death because of sin, have now been quickened into newness of life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, we enter that new creation by being born again.

Does any one say, "How may I know definitely whether I belong to that new creation or not?" Listen to what our Lord Himself says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). I am very fond of the Roman Catholic translation of that verse, the translation that you will find in the Rheims-Douay Version of the Bible. There you read, "Amen, amen, I say unto you, He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and comes not into judgment; but is passed out of death into life." Is not that a wonderful translation? Do you sense the meaning of it? The Word of God speaks with that double affirmation which is equivalent to the divine oath: "Amen, amen, truly, truly, I say unto you, if you hear My word, and you believe Him that sent Me, you have eternal life, and shall not come into judgment; but you are passed out of death into life." That is, if you receive the gospel message in your heart, you have everlasting life. It is not something you have to work for, or pray for, it is something that God gives instantaneously when you put your trust in the One who is revealed in the gospel. You will never come into judgment, but already God sees you as having passed out of that condition of death into life, and thus linked with Christ as the Head of the new creation.

"If any man be in Christ, [it] is . . . new creation." And in this new creation "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." We are finished with our old state and condition. The old creation fell in Adam; the new creation stands

in Christ; and once in Him we are in Him forever. The moment you put your trust in Him God links you up with Him. If Christ fails, the new creation will go down, as the old one did when its head fell. But Christ will never fail. Christ is already seated on the throne of God in heaven, and we are linked with Him, and there in this new creation "all things are of God." Do not try to read into this what some New Thought advocates seek to read into it. They will take a statement like this and will tell us it means that there is nothing evil in the universe, and so we must not even think of Satan as evil. Satan, they tell us, is only the personification of our wrong thoughts, but we know from the Word of God that our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). There is a great deal of evil in this universe, but it all belongs to the old creation. The apostle is speaking of the new creation, and it is in the new creation that "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." This reconciliation is even more than justification. When we come to Christ, all our sins are forgiven; more than that, we are justified from all things. God looks upon us as though we had never sinned at all. Justification is the sentence of the judge in favor of the prisoner, it is God saying, "I declare this man not guilty," No wonder the apostle tells us, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Reconciliation goes a step farther; it is not only that our sins are forgiven and that divine justice has nothing against us, but it is that He has received us as His own to His loving heart, and we are reconciled to God and we joy in Him.

In our unconverted state we would not have thought such a thing possible. We were happy only when we could get God out of our minds, but now we find our joy in the Lord. It was not the life merely of Jesus that reconciled us, but we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. God in His love and grace had come out to seek us in the Person of the Lord Jesus, and actually in Christ went to the cross and settled the sin question for us. The Lord Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us, and that broke down all the enmity and won our hearts to Him. Henceforth we are reconciled to the God from whom at one time we turned away.

Now He has given to us a ministry, "the ministry of reconciliation." This ministry of reconciliation is God's call to lost men everywhere to come to Him with all their sins, with all their griefs, with all their burdens, and be reconciled to Him. Mark, it is not that God has to be reconciled to us.

God never had one hard thought toward me. Sinner, He has never had one hard thought toward you. You have had hard thoughts toward Him, and because of that you have taken it for granted that of course God felt the same toward you, but He loves you in spite of all your sin and folly and iniquity. God's

heart goes out toward you in love. Jesus did not die in order to enable God to love sinners, but He died *because* God loves sinners. "God so loved . . . that he gave." He so loved a world of sinners "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And so it is not God who needs to be reconciled to us, but we as sinners need reconciliation to Him. If you have never yet turned to Him, you need to go to Him, and when you realize something of His grace toward you, you will be reconciled to Him. It is a wonderful thing when all enmity disappears and you can joy in the Lord and rejoice in the God of your salvation. This is reconciliation.

But in the next verses the apostle unfolds this ministry of reconciliation. He says, "And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; [namely], that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." The Lord Jesus Christ was no ordinary man; He was not simply the best of men; but He was God manifest in flesh. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"; that is, God in Christ was going out after men to try to win them back. They had gone away from Him, trampling on His goodness, spurning His love, actually assailing His righteousness, but here God in Christ goes out after them, pleads with them to return to God, offers to forgive them, to put away all their sins and make them His own. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Christ did not come to charge man's sins against him but to pay man's debt. We read of that poor woman in the eighth chapter of John's gospel and get such a conception of the cruelty and hardness of man's heart. She had fallen into a heinous sin, and they dragged her into the temple where the people were gathered, and pointed the finger of scorn at her as she stood there with downcast eyes, trembling, overwhelmed with shame. They told the story of her sin and degradation, but what did Jesus do? He stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. Why did He do that? In Jeremiah it is written, "They that depart from me shall be written on the earth" (Jer. 17:13). They were saying of this woman, "What a sinner she is, how vile, how guilty!" but Jesus, by His very act, is saying, "You are all guilty; you are all to be written in the earth. From dust you came, and to dust you go because of sin," and then lifting Himself up He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7), and then stooped to the dust again. I think that twice going down to the dust suggested that He Himself was about to descend into the place of death to bring poor sinners up to this sphere of life, but as He wrote again upon the dust they turned and went away, from the eldest even until the least. The oldest rascal there, with all his piety, knew he had sins enough to sink his soul to the depths of hell, and the next, until the youngest was gone, and the

woman was left alone with Jesus, and of course the multitude standing around. And when Jesus looked up He said, "Hath no man condemned thee?" (John 8:10). She said, "No man, Lord" (v. 11). By that term, *Lord*, she expressed her faith in Him, for "no man can [call] Jesus . . . Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3). And He said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

"Not imputing their trespasses unto them." The Son of Man came not to condemn the world but to save the world. What! you say, does He not condemn a sin like that? Does He make light of uncleanness and unchastity and licentiousness? No, but for all that sin He was going to the cross. The condemnation was to fall on Him, and because He was to bear that poor woman's sin, when she trusted in Him, He could send her away uncondemned. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." He has entrusted the administration of the gospel message to us; and Paul says, "We are ambassadors for Christ." We go to men on God's behalf, "as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." How can we be reconciled to God? We may be ashamed of our sins, we may grieve over our past, but will not sin ever remain, will it not ever rise up between our souls and God in spite of our deepest repentance? No, because in the cross that question has been fully met to the divine satisfaction, God has made Christ to be sin for us. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." And upon the cross Christ took the sinner's place, He was treated as though guilty of all the sin and iniquity and unrighteousness of the ages. He was there as the great Sin Offering.

On Him almighty vengeance fell,
That would have sunk a world to hell;
He bore it for a chosen race,
And thus becomes our Hiding-Place.

And because He, the sinless One, has died in the place of sinners, we, the sinful, may enter into life, may become the righteousness of God in Him.

This last verse of our chapter epitomizes the deepest meaning of the cross. It shows the One who was sinless inwardly and outwardly, enduring the wrath of God which we deserved. Our sins put Him on the cross. But, having settled the sin-question to the divine satisfaction, He has been raised from the dead and seated as the glorified Man at God's right hand. There on the throne He is our

righteousness. The Father sees every believer in Him, free from all condemnation, made the display of the righteousness of God in Him. He Himself is our righteousness. We are complete in Him. God is satisfied and our consciences are at peace. What a salvation is this!

LECTURE 12

THE IDEAL MINISTER OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 6:1–10

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. (vv. 1–10)

This is the standard that the Spirit of God sets up for every servant of Christ, and is that at which every true “minister of God” should aim. You will notice the apostle speaks of such as fellow workers with the rest of His people. “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” The New Testament minister of Christ, the scriptural pastor, evangelist, or teacher, is not one who lords it over the consciences of God’s people, but he is a fellow worker with them. The words, “with him,” which may suggest workers together *with God*, are not really found in the original. The apostle is not exactly saying, “We are fellow workers with God,” for we are under God as our Master, but we who are members of the church, and those of us who have particular responsibility, are fellow workers, we are laborers together for the blessing of the whole body of Christ and for the evangelization of a lost world. Addressing this church, the apostle says, “We . . . beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” Christians have been richly blessed; God has lavished His goodness upon us. What response are we making to the love of His heart? To receive His great goodness, to glory in salvation by grace, and yet to live carnal, worldly lives is indeed to “receive . . . the grace of God in vain.” Let there be on our part a constant response of loving devotion to Him who has so graciously accepted us in the Beloved.

“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.” The apostle quotes this passage from the Old Testament to remind us how God has taken us up when poor sinners and has made us His own. But I cannot pass the last part of this quotation without reminding any who are out of Christ that this message of salvation is still going out to a lost world and to all men everywhere. God is saying, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” If you are still in your sins, still out of Christ, there is no reason why you should go on even for one more day, for one hour, even for one minute, refusing the salvation God is offering, or fearing to appropriate it lest it might not yet be God’s time to save. It is ever God’s time: “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” The moment you are ready to turn to God as a poor, lost, needy sinner, that moment He is ready to receive and to save and to grant you His forgiveness and to make you His child. This verse really comes in parenthetically. In the verses that follow the apostle sets forth the ideal minister of Christ.

In the first place, he must be careful of his own personal behavior that he may not stumble another. “Giving no offence in any thing.” By the term *offence* he does not mean hurting people’s feelings. It is quite impossible for any

servant of Christ to behave himself so as never to hurt the feelings of someone. It is impossible to so speak, to so act that one can forever be free from hurting people's feelings. Some people carry their feelings on their sleeves all the time. If you do not shake hands with them, you probably intended to slight them. If you do, you hurt them, forgetting they have rheumatism. If you stop to speak with them, you are interrupting them. If you do not, you are "high-hatting" them. If you write them a letter, they are sure you want to get their money. If you do not, you are neglecting them. If you visit them, you are bothering them. If you do not, it shows you have no interest in the flock. It is impossible to please everyone, but when the apostle says, "Giving no offence," he means so behaving yourself that no one can point to you and say, "That man's ways are such that I lose confidence in the salvation that he professes." The minister of Christ must first of all be a regenerated man, and then a man walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, "giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that the ministry be not blamed. But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience." How much patience the minister of Christ needs!

The apostle then gives us three series of nines. First, he gives us in nine different expressions the training of the minister of Christ. He is to manifest much patience in *affliction*. He is not to expect to be above affliction; it is the common lot of God's people in this scene. And the minister of Christ must share with the rest in *necessity*. He is not to expect to live in luxury while others are often distressed. I have been thankful for experiences that God has given me in difficult pioneer days in Christian work. They enable me to enter into the feelings of others who are in deep need. I have often known what it was to pull up my belt one notch for breakfast, and another for lunch, and another for supper. The longest time I went without food and kept on preaching, was three days and three nights, and yet by the grace of God I was enabled to preach three times a day during those three days and nights. I happened to be in a place where I had no money, and God's people thought I lived by faith and they let me do it, but nothing came in for food. I have often thanked God for those days, for I have found out how God could sustain a man altogether without food. I shall never forget when on the morning of the fourth day I thought I would stay in bed for breakfast, and then I saw a letter slipped under my door. I opened it and found these words, "Enclosed is an expression of Christian fellowship," and there was a ten-dollar bill. I went out and enjoyed the best breakfast that I ever remember having in my life. Hunger whets the appetite. I fancy there are very few who have trod the path of faith who have not known these things.

And then the Christian minister is to approve himself in *distresses*, and if he cannot find anything otherwise to distress him, he will always find someone to help him along. In Paul's day ministers had to pass through what few of us are called upon to pass through these days. "In *stripes*, in *imprisonments*, in *tumults*, in *labors*, in *watchings*, in *fastings*." Here you have the training of the minister. He is to learn his lessons in the school of affliction that he may be able to enter into and sympathize with the people of God in their afflictions.

And then in verses 6–7 we read of nine characteristics that should mark him out as a man of God. He is to be characterized by *pureness*. The minister of Christ is to be above anything like uncleanness of life or thought, he is to be marked by that purity that characterized the Lord Jesus Christ. And then "by *knowledge*." It is his responsibility to become acquainted with the things of God and with other branches of useful knowledge that may help him to minister to people in their various states of heart and mind, for he should be Christ's servant to the fullest possible extent. Then he must be marked "by *longsuffering*," not readily provoked. In fact, the apostle tells us that where love controls the heart, one is not easily provoked. Nothing so shows a man out of fellowship with God as a bad temper. A bad-tempered minister will never be a real testimony for Christ. Then, "by *kindness*." And how one fails in this, how little he rises to this ideal! Men and women long to find those who have a tender, kindly interest in them. And this should characterize the pastor.

But next we read, "by the *Holy Ghost*." He is to be a man not only indwelt by the Holy Spirit but filled with the Spirit of God, living in the power of the Spirit, and so ministering by the Spirit. I have prayed hundreds of times, and I still pray, "God keep me from ever being able to preach except in the power of the Holy Spirit of God." I would rather be smitten dumb than mock God and mock the people to whom I speak, by simply standing up to give them my own vain thoughts instead of the mind of God in the energy of His Spirit. And then again we read, "By *love unfeigned*." A love that is genuine, not put on, that is not pretended but is real, because implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God. "By the *word of truth*." The minister of Christ must know his Bible, and preach the Bible by the power of God, which only comes as one draws from Him in secret before appearing in public. "By the *armour of righteousness* on the right hand and on the left." That is, right living, right doing.

And then in closing this description of the ideal minister we have in verses 8–10, nine paradoxes which are all to be seen in the man of God. "By *honour and dishonour*." Some may approve and some may disapprove, but he is to keep the even tenor of his way. "By *evil report and good report*." Some may say wicked,

unkind things about him, but he is not to retaliate. Others may over-praise him, but he is not to be lifted up but to go on in dependence on the Lord. "*As deceivers, and yet true.*" Men may claim that he knows not whereof he speaks, but he is to give his message knowing it to be the very Word of God. "*As unknown, and yet well known.*" How little the minister of Christ counts for in the great world outside, and yet how much he may mean to the people of God. I remember well how stirred I was when our late beloved brother, Dr. E. A. Torrey, passed away. I was in New York and I picked up a newspaper, and there saw a little two-inch item saying that Dr. R. A. Torrey had died, and in the same paper there was a column-and-a-half telling of the death of a movie actor on the same date. But when I picked up a Christian journal a little later, I found column after column telling of Dr. Torrey, and there was no mention of the actor! It makes all the difference which crowd you belong to. "*As dying, and, behold, we live.*" The apostle says, "I die daily," and then again, "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" (4:11). And then, "*As chastened, and not killed*"—as patiently enduring divine discipline and yet not killed. "*As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.*" How can a man be sorrowful and always be rejoicing? No man can look around upon a world like this without sorrow if he possesses the Spirit of Christ. Yet we are made to rejoice as we think of the goodness of the Lord. "*As poor, yet making many rich.*" I have heard of very few servants of Christ possessed of much of this world's wealth. They go through life giving not only their testimony but of their means to bless and help others, and die at last leaving little behind them, and yet if they have been the means of bringing many souls to Christ and building up His people in the truth, what a privilege that is, for they have been making many rich. "*As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*" The minister of Christ surrenders in a large measure his right to a place in this world, to the honor of this world, to the wealth of this world. But though surrendering it all, though it seems he may be literally throwing away his life, in Christ he has everything. This is the ideal minister of Christ. To what extent do we who are engaged in the work of the Lord measure up to it? Let us test ourselves by these verses, and seek by grace to manifest those things that the Holy Spirit here puts before us. Then our hearers will indeed realize that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him!

LECTURE 13

SEPARATION FROM EVIL

2 Corinthians 6:11–18

O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (vv. 11–18)

All down through the ages since God has been working redemptively in
A delivering men from sin, from its guilt and its power, Satan has been

seeking in every possible way to thwart that work, and although Calvary has demonstrated the fact that he is already a defeated adversary, yet he still persists in trying to injure by all means in his power everything that is of God. You will find as you read both Testaments, that in every instance when God begins a new testimony Satan seeks to destroy it by persecution. He stirs up the hearts of those who hate God and hate His Word to work injury upon those who love Him and love the Scriptures. This was particularly true in the beginning of the history of the church of God. Persecution broke out first in Jerusalem, and then spread through the world, finally centering itself in Rome, and for two hundred awful years the Devil did everything possible to destroy the church of God by stirring up the hatred of men and women throughout the entire Roman empire, so that literally hundreds of thousands of Christian men, women, and children were martyred for Christ's sake. But down through the ages it has been demonstrated, as Augustine said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Satan always finds that persecution is utterly unable to destroy the testimony of God.

And then the enemy of souls works in another way. He persecutes, he destroys, he puts God's people to death, gives them to realize the bitter enmity of the world, and when that will not keep people from coming to Christ, nor keep the church from witnessing for Christ, he turns the tables, and seeks to become in some sense the patron of Christianity. He endeavors to render the testimony of the church innocuous by amalgamation with the world. It is in this way that Israel fell. As long as Israel remained a separated people they had a testimony for God in the world, but when they followed after the idolatry of the nations, when they made marriages with the heathen, they lost their testimony, and so God set them to one side. They were of no further use as a witness in the world. It has been the same with the church throughout the centuries.

As long as the church walked in holy separation from the world it has been a power for God, sinners have been convicted, and anxious ones have been saved. Whole nations have been stirred by a separated, devoted, godly people, but just as soon as the church has listened to the suggestions of the enemy, coming now in the guise of a friend, and has given her fair hand to the world, has amalgamated with the world, at once her testimony has been annulled, she has ceased to be of any real account for God in this scene. In the Word of God we find the importance of separation from evil stressed. If we would really count for the Lord we need to remember this, for the professing church all about us has become contaminated to a great extent by the spirit of the world. How often we find ourselves going after the ways of the world, and very often we dress and behave

just like the world, and indulge in the same things that the world indulges in, and so lose our power with souls.

The story is told of a young woman, brought up in a very careful Christian home, who when she went away to college was persuaded by some nominal Christians that if she would have any influence with her fellow students she would have to let down the bars a little bit. So at last she was persuaded to learn to dance, and she later went to the college prom. There on the floor she was dancing with a young man, and as she danced she said to herself, "I am doing this in order to let people see that I am not narrow, to let folk see that I can meet them on their own ground, and I must remember to bear witness for Christ here." And so as the dance went on she tried to say a little word, but her partner did not know what it was all about. As he led her back to a seat she said, "What I am anxious to know is, are you a Christian?"

He looked at her and said, "Good gracious, no. You are not, are you?"

"Oh, yes," she said; "I am."

"Well, what on earth are you doing here, then?"

She realized at once that even the world has a high standard for a Christian. The world expects a Christian to walk in separation from it. It will do what it can to get the Christian to lower his standard, but always despises him when he does lower it.

I was having meetings in a church in San Jose, California, some years ago. One night the leader announced that a certain young lady would sing a solo. She was very beautiful, and had a carefully-trained, well-modulated voice, and sang very nicely. The title of the song was, "Jesus Satisfies." I was quite moved by it myself, and hoped others were. At the close of the meeting I asked any anxious ones to meet me at the front or to remain in their seats. I noticed a young woman sitting by herself, and so I went down to speak with her. I said, "Are you anxious about your soul?"

She looked at me and said, "Well, yes and no. I was anxious; I came to this meeting with the thought that I would like to become a Christian, but if ever I become a Christian I want to be a different one from Miss So-and-So," and she gave the name of the young lady who had sung the solo.

"Oh," I said, "you are acquainted with the young lady?"

"Oh, yes."

"But you don't like her particularly?"

"Oh," she said, "she is my best friend."

"But what do you mean, then?"

"Well," she said, "it is just this. I believe a Christian ought to live a different

life from a worldling. I am a worldling, and I do not profess to be anything else. I have been trying to find satisfaction in the world; I confess I have never found it, but my friend, Miss So-and-So, got up and sang, 'Jesus Satisfies,' and that is a lie; He doesn't satisfy her. She professes to be a Christian, and she often tells me I ought to be a Christian, but when I go to the theater I always find her there, when I go to the ball I find her there, when I go to play cards she is there, when I go into anything of the world, she is always there. What difference is there between her and myself? The only difference I can see is that she professes to have something which I do not profess to possess, but it does not do anything for her. Her life is just like mine."

What could I as the preacher say? I talked to the young woman, and tried to show her that no matter how Christians fail, Christ abides and He never fails, but she got up and went out unsaved.

The Christian's power comes from a separated life, and a separated life results from being filled with the Holy Spirit of God. As you walk in obedience to the Word of God the Spirit of God fills you, and thus you go out to live in the world to the glory of the Lord Jesus. One of the troubles of the Corinthians was this, there were many Christians there, but they were trying to give their friends the idea that Christianity was a very liberal thing, and so were amalgamating with the world. And the apostle says, "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you. We do not want to find fault with you, we do not want you to think that we are narrow and bound, and do not sympathize with you. We love you, our hearts go out to you; we put these things before you because we love you." Christians, and especially at times some of our dear young Christians, imagine that when those of us who are interested in their souls speak to them seriously and earnestly about the folly of worldliness, and try to guide them in the path of devotion to Christ, that it is because we have grown older that we do not sympathize with youth and do not understand their problems. Let me say, "Ye are not straitened in us." Our hearts are really concerned about you, "but ye are straitened in your own bowels," you are narrowing your own life by worldliness. You do not realize this, you think you are enjoying life because you are letting down the bars, but you are not. You are not getting out of Christ what you might, and you are not getting out of your Christian life what you might, if you were more devoted to the One whom you call Lord. Your life is narrow and straitened because of inconsistency. This was true of the Corinthians, and this is true of many today.

Paul tells them, "I want you to be enlarged, to get the best out of life, to enjoy to the fullest what Christ has for you," and in order that this may be, he gives them a most earnest exhortation: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with

unbelievers." What does he mean by that? The reference is, of course, to the passage in Deuteronomy 22:10. God said to His people, who were an agricultural people, "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." The ox was a clean beast. It could be offered in sacrifice and its flesh used for food. The ass was an unclean beast. It could not be offered to the Lord and its flesh could not be eaten. And God said, You are not to take these two and yoke them together, even for service, for they do not belong together. And so He says to the Christians, "You cannot expect to glorify Me if linked up with an ungodly man or woman, even for service." "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The passage applies to church relationships, to things in society where you have to be in fellowship with unsaved people, to being in business with unsaved folk. Many a Christian has found out to his sorrow that he made his mistake by going into business with an unsaved man, because an unsaved man is actuated by different principles from those which actuate a saved man. And, of course, it applies to the marriage relationship. What a serious thing it is for a Christian young woman to think of giving her hand in marriage to an unconverted man, in the hope, of course, that someday she will be able to win him for Christ, or what a foolish thing for a Christian man to take an unsaved girl for a life companion. If they won't come to Christ through your earnest pleading before they are married, you are never likely to win them after the honeymoon is over. They will settle back into their own way, and the chances are that instead of you drawing them your way in the days to come, they will begin to draw you their way. You have heard of the boys who found two linnets in the field. They brought them home and put them in cages hung on either side of their canary. The mother asked the reason for this, and they said, "Well, you see, we got these young, and we have hung them by the side of the canary so that they will be accustomed to listening to the canary sing, and so instead of learning to chirp like a linnet they will learn to sing like the canary." The mother did not say anything, but shook her head, and later on when they came in, they exclaimed, "Why, Mother, listen! Our canary is chirping like a linnet!" That is the way it works. That canary did not get its song back again until they had covered it up for some days, and then when they put it out in the bright sunshine and took the covering off, the little thing began to sing once more. If you are going to count for God you must avoid the unequal yoke. If not, you are going contrary to the Word of God and you cannot expect blessing.

"For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" How can you expect to get on if you have chosen the path of righteousness, and the other, the path of unrighteousness? "What communion hath light with darkness?"

Either the darkness must flee before the light, or the light will soon be dimmed by the darkness. You cannot have both at one time. "And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" If you have taken Christ as your Savior, He is your Lord and your Master, and how can you expect to glorify Him if you link up with one who is a follower of Satan? "Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" By "infidel" it does not mean necessarily an atheist, but it means an unbeliever. You profess to believe in the Lord Jesus, you believe that through His death upon the cross your soul is saved. Well, then, what fellowship can you have with one who refuses to trust your Savior? Oh, be careful, Christian. You say, "Well, I want to win them for Christ." You will win them best by obedience to the Word of God, not by disobedience. Walk with God yourself in holy separation to Christ, and you can expect your testimony to count with others.

"What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" The two are in opposition, the one to the other. "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This is the divine ideal, this is what the church of God really is, and any company of believers in any given locality is the temple of the living God in that place. How careful we should be then of anything that would mar the temple, of anything that would hinder the display of God among His own people. Do you know that each Christian meeting with any group of believers is either a help or a hindrance to the entire testimony that goes forth from that place? If you are living for God, walking in holy separation to Christ, you are helping the testimony; if walking waywardly, in willfulness, in worldliness, then you are just helping to that extent to obscure the light that ought to shine forth from the temple of the living God.

The apostle closes that solemn section with this earnest exhortation, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." What does this mean? It means exactly what it says; it does not need any explaining. "Come out from among them" means come out from among them. "Touch not the unclean thing." What does that mean? It means, touch not the unclean thing. If I tried to explain it, I would only confound and confuse it. Christians are called to walk in separation from the world and to refrain from anything that would contaminate their consciences and hinder their fellowship with God. If you take this position, He says, "[I] will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Is God not my Father if I am a Christian, even though I am not wholly separated from the world? God is the Father of all believers, but He is a Father *unto* us only as we walk in obedience to His Word. I am the father of my

child, but if he is willful and disobedient I cannot be a father unto him in the sense I would like to be, and so God cannot do what His loving heart yearns to do when we are not walking in obedience to His Word.

Let us yield glad, happy obedience to Him, and thus know the blessedness of these words, “[I] will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

LECTURE 14

PERFECTING HOLINESS

2 Corinthians 7:1–16

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more. For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were

made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoyce therefore that I have confidence in you in all things. (vv. 1–16)

In order properly to understand this chapter we need to remember that some time before the apostle Paul had heard of some very serious wrongdoings tolerated in the church of God at Corinth. One offence was of greatest gravity; a man had actually entered into an incestuous, adulterous relationship with his own father's wife—his stepmother, of course—and the church, instead of immediately dealing with this great sin and seeking to show the man his wickedness, and if he refused to repent excommunicating him from their fellowship, rather gloried in the breadth that would permit them to tolerate a thing like that and go right on without discipline. There were other offences, brother going to law with brother, etc. When the apostle heard of these things he wanted to visit Corinth, and yet he felt that if he did, it would mean he would have to be very stern in dealing with these questions. He disliked this, and, too, the Spirit of God seemed to hinder his going, so instead of that he wrote them a letter, that letter which we have already taken up, the first epistle to the Corinthians, and in it he pointed out these things and called upon them to act in the fear of God. As to the wicked man, the Word of God was, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13).

After having sent the letter Paul was greatly perturbed. The epistle was divinely inspired, and he was a servant of the Lord, but he was a very human

personage, just as we are. After he had sent the letter he began to question the wisdom of it; he wondered whether it might simply stir up the flesh in these Corinthians and alienate them further from God and from himself. He questioned whether perhaps it would not have been better if he had gone to them and dealt personally with them, and wondered just what reaction the letter would have upon them. Finally his distress was so keen he could not wait to hear from them in the ordinary way, so he sent his friend and companion, Titus, to Corinth, to find out exactly how they had acted upon receipt of the letter. After waiting some time, still in perturbation of mind (for he loved the church of God, he loved the saints in spite of their failures and he was fearful lest when he wanted to help he might have hurt, lest when he wanted to bless his message might have had the contrary effect), Titus came and said something like this, "Paul, your letter had the effect you desired it to have. Those brethren in Corinth have taken it as a message from God, and have dealt with this evil thing and have put this man out of their fellowship. He, on his part, has accepted it as divine discipline and is repenting in bitterness of soul. He weeps over his sin and feels utterly unworthy of further recognition of fellowship with the church. They have determined that they are going to keep that assembly clean from all these evils." When Paul heard these things he was greatly rejoiced and sat down and wrote this second letter, and in this chapter he comes to the subject before him.

The first verse properly belongs to the previous chapter: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved." That leads us to ask what promises, and so we turn back to chapter 6 to find out, and we read in the last two verses, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." God has given promises of blessing that will accrue to us if we walk in separation from evil, and now we must see to it that we meet the conditions. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." How do we cleanse ourselves? We cannot cleanse our own consciences from the guilt of sin. God has to do that. Our consciences can be cleansed from sin only by the precious atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I could not wash out one stain from a guilty conscience. But if a Christian, having been cleansed from my sin by the blood of Christ, my heart needs daily cleansing, and that is by faith in the Word which God has given. As I receive that Word in faith and I act upon it, I cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

What is the difference between filthiness of the flesh and filthiness of the

spirit? There are two classes of sin, and all sin is filthy in the sight of God. Filthiness of the flesh refers to sins of the body, and there are so many of them, unholy lusts, unbridled appetites. Drunkenness, gluttony, licentiousness, inordinate affection, are all sins of the flesh, and though at the present time our abominable philosophies throw a glamour over these things they are utterly vile in God's sight. My own heart is stirred to indignation as I pick up the newspapers or magazines of the day, for there is hardly one that does not seem to be glorifying sin. Alluring advertisements suggest that the grandest thing in the world is to indulge in the free use of strong drink. There are beautiful pictures of lovely women drinking with their men friends, and of the whole family gathered around the table being served cocktails. All this in reputable magazines going into Christian homes to teach our children that drinking is a fashionable and decent and respectable thing, when God's Word says, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also" (Hab. 2:15). "Look not upon the wine when it is red" (Prov. 23:31). All men's efforts to make money by causing us to become a nation of drunkards is something for which they will have to account to Almighty God someday. My heart is stirred when I think of these things. You see the same thing in regard to the vile habit of tobacco. Pick up the magazines that come to your home, and you will see some dainty young woman with an abominable cigarette in her fingers. They are trying to teach our girls that if they would be up-to-date they must become cigarette fiends. I cannot understand Christian women tolerating things like that. There is not one good reason why Christian women, or men either, should poison their bodies with tobacco.

And then again take our bookstands. They are filled with the vilest pornographic literature, glorifying fornication and adultery, as though man reaches the highest and noblest in life when he throws the reins upon every low appetite and lives to please himself in absolute indifference to purity and decency and goodness. Christians ought to be very careful to give everything like this a wide berth. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh," let us avoid everything that has to do with the filthiness of the flesh.

What about filthiness of the spirit? Vanity, pride, conceit, haughtiness, and unbelief are just as evil as these other things in the sight of God. Take this dainty girl who stands in front of her mirror trying to make a work of art out of her face in order to attract the attention of the opposite sex, that vanity that is so characteristic of her is as truly filthy in the sight of God as the other sins I have been mentioning. Take that man who is so haughty and proud, and is seeking power and authority over his fellows, constantly looking for admiration on the part of

men who like himself are going on to the grave, that haughtiness, that pride, is in God's sight absolutely filthy. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Mark this, none of us have yet attained to perfect holiness. We are commanded to "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). But we follow that which is still before us; we have not attained to holiness, but we are to aim at "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." As we submit ourselves to the Word and seek to judge those things that we see to be contrary to the mind of God, we will grow in grace and thus become holier men and women as the days go by.

Beginning with verse 2 and going on to the end of the chapter, the apostle sets before the Corinthians the exercises that he had in regard to them, and the joy that now fills his soul because they are indeed "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." First, he mentions his claim to their obedience, for he had no right to be heard if in himself he was not seeking to live out what he taught them. But he says, "Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man." Many a one who has taken the position of a servant of Christ, who is recognized as a minister of the gospel, has failed terribly because of lack of care right here. Paul can face the whole world and can say, "We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man." He did not teach that which would injure others; he did not by his behavior set a bad example to others; he had no part in turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, as some had done, or in defrauding another. He never had to do with money matters that were shady; he did not collect money for one purpose and use it for another; he did not pretend to be raising funds to do certain things with them and then allow them to be turned aside into some other channel. He was straight in all his dealings, and that is what God expects of every servant of His.

And then he says, as it were, "I am not saying this about myself to condemn you, but I want you to know that I am entitled to be heard because I am living what I preach. I love you too much to want to condemn you; you are my children in the Lord, and I am concerned about you, and I want to help you, not to hinder you. My boldness of speech is great, I have told other people of the wonderful work of grace that has taken place in Corinth, and I was in great distress when you were going wrong, but now I am joyful even though I am passing through tribulation."

"When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of

Titus." What was the comfort Titus brought? "Not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you." It did him good to hear how earnest they were in putting away the evildoer from their assembly. Titus told Paul of their "earnest desire," and their "mourning." It was not vindictiveness that put him away—they mourned over him. Paul rejoiced in their loyalty to him as the one who had led them to Christ. The previous epistle, he found, did upset them. He was not sorry now that he wrote it, but says, "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance. . . . For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." This is the divine principle. Of course he is speaking to them as Christians. They had been saved by acting upon the truth revealed to them. But the same principle always prevails. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of." "Repentance unto salvation"—that leads a man to judge himself in the presence of God, and thus be in the place where God can bless him.

"For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." They were determined to see that the church now was clear of all complicity with evil, they were stirred to the very depths of their souls. The evil must be dealt with if blessing would come, and they valued God's favor above all else.

And so Paul says, "Though I wrote unto you, I did not do it in order to punish the man that did the wrong, nor in order to comfort the man who was wronged." It is impossible, you see, for any one to commit that sin without doing wrong himself and wronging others. But he makes it clear that he wrote to show that he really loved them and wanted them to be right with God—that his care for them in the sight of God might appear unto them. Now because of the way they had acted his heart was filled with gladness, and his boasting that he expressed when talking about them had been fully justified, and Titus' inward affection was more abundant toward them, while he remembered the obedience of them all, how with fear and trembling they received him. What a happy outcome this was, and what a lesson it ought to have for us today! We are continually praying for revival, but we can pray for that from now until doomsday and will not get it, unless as individuals we judge any evil that is in our own lives. It will never come until we as individuals put away all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. That is what God is waiting for, for His people individually to get right with Him. Mark, it is not for us to look at others and say, "O Lord, Thou knowest what a terrible state Thy people are in. Help them to get right with

Thee.” No, it is, “Show me any extent to which any sin has found lodgment in my heart and life, and give me grace to judge it in Thy holy presence, that I may put away ‘all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’”

A woman came to a servant of Christ and said, “I wish you would go and talk to my husband; he is getting where he never stays home at night; he sets the children such a bad example; and if I talk to him, he slams the door and out he goes.”

The minister happened to know something of that home, and said to the woman, “Before we pray for your husband there is something I want to talk to you about. What about that vile temper of yours? Go to God and say, ‘O God, I come to Thee confessing my vile, wicked temper; my bad temper is driving my husband from home; it is alienating my children; my bad temper is bringing dishonor on the name of the Lord. Deliver me from that bad temper, that thus I may be able to present the sweetness and graciousness of Christ, and so help my husband and children.’”

Did she do it? She jumped to her feet and ran out in another fit of temper. Let us “perfect holiness in the fear of God” by cleansing *ourselves* from “all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” and then we may expect blessing.

LECTURE 15

THE GRACE OF LIBERALITY

2 Corinthians 8:1–24

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to

be forward a year ago. Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: as it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack. But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you. Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf. (vv. 1–24)

We have in this chapter a very wonderful window through which we may look into conditions prevailing in the early church. We are allowed, nineteen hundred years later, to look through this chapter, as it were, into the very life of God's people so long ago. A famine had taken place in Palestine, and many of the Jewish believers, many of the early Christians in Jerusalem and Judea and other parts of Palestine, were suffering. There was a real depression prevailing all over that land. Naturally in such a time the world cares for its own. In those days especially there would be very little provision made, very little concern shown, regarding those who had trusted the Lord Jesus Christ. By that very confession of faith in Him they had lost their standing in Judaism and were obnoxious to the idolatrous system of the Roman Empire. But just as soon as word of their plight reaches the apostle laboring in a distant land, he says, "Now

here is the opportunity for the Christians among whom I am working to show how true their fellowship is with their brethren over there in Judea,” and he immediately stresses the importance of self-denial, of giving generously in order that the needs of the Judean believers may be met.

A chapter like this is most instructive to us, for we are still in the world where believers will be going through difficulties and hardships, and we are to be helpers in this way of one another's faith. We think particularly of those who have left their homes, left the opportunity of making a good salary in this land, to go out to carry the gospel of the grace of God among the heathen. What a shame it would be to us if they were left there suffering for the lack of temporal necessities. It is our privilege to show our fellowship with them by denying ourselves, in order to keep them free from care along these lines. There is a wonderful principle that runs all through this chapter, the principle of brotherly fellowship with those in need. You will notice that the apostle had already brought this matter before the Corinthians when he went through there the year before. He said, “What can you do?” “Well,” they had said, “we will give something; we will do our best.” Now he has been up in Macedonia laboring, and he is coming back through Corinth on his way to Jerusalem, and so writes and practically says, “I hope you are prepared to keep the pledge you made a year ago.”

Sometimes people say, “I do not believe in making pledges.” At the bottom of that there may be utter selfishness. We all make pledges. We make a pledge to the landlord when we promise to pay him so much a month. If you are running a bill at the grocery store, you have pledged to pay for what you purchase. You make pledges when you buy anything on the installment plan. Are God and the work of God the only Person and the only thing that are of so little importance that you cannot risk making a pledge in order to help in Christian service? These Corinthians had made a pledge, and the apostle says, in verse 11, “Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.” They had been willing to do this, they had said, “We will do something, Paul, when you come back again.” “Now,” he says, “you keep that pledge; it may take self-denial; you may have to do without a great many things you want, but these Christians in Judea are doing without very much more.” And so we may have to do without some luxuries if we are going to make and keep a proper pledge toward our missionaries, but they are doing without far more. They do not have grand pianos, expensive radios, and cars, they do not have beautiful homes and furniture, they are doing without these things for Jesus' sake, and so we can do without many things in order to help them on. Let us look at this a little more carefully.

In the first verse of this chapter he says, "Moreover, brethren, I want you to know of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia." How was that grace manifested? Many of us talk a great deal about grace and show very little. God has manifested grace toward us, and how full of grace our lives ought to be. These Macedonians had been saved by grace, and now the rich grace of giving is bestowed upon them. Giving is a grace. "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Notice four expressions here: "Great trial of affliction," "abundance of joy," "deep poverty," "riches of liberality." Is it not remarkable to find all four of these expressions brought into such an intimate relationship? They were going through a great trial, "a great trial of affliction." But out of "the abundance of their joy," yet coupled with "their deep poverty," they gave, and it "abounded unto the riches of their liberality." I do not think that means that they gave large sums. They probably did not have large sums to give, but the little was regarded by God as a larger gift than if very much more had come from people far more wealthy than the Macedonians. God's way of estimating gifts is different from ours. He estimates our gifts, not by the amount we give, but by the amount we have left. If a man is a millionaire and gives a thousand dollars, that does not count as much as one who has an income of a dollar a day and gives a dime. And so we need not be afraid to bring our little gifts, thinking He may despise them. He said of the poor widow, "[She] hath cast in more than they all: . . . [for] she [gave] of her [poverty] . . . all the living that she had" (Luke 21:3-4).

They were taking up a missionary offering once in a Scotch church. One rather close-fisted brother was there, known to be worth something like £50,000, which in those days was considered a fortune, and as the deacons went around taking up the offering, one of them whispered to him, "Brother, how much are you going to give?"

"Oh, well, I will put in the widow's mite," he said, and prepared to put in a penny.

"Brethren," the deacon called out, "we have all we need; this brother is giving £50,000."

If he was going to give the widow's mite, he would have to give all he had, you see. It is the widows who give like that, not the rich folk.

But these poor Macedonians out of their poverty gave, and gave with joy. They did not give grudgingly; they were glad to do what they could; and the apostle says, "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves." They gave to the very limit, and would have given more if they could have done so.

"How much are you going to give, brother?" somebody asked. "Oh," he said, "I guess I can give ten dollars and not feel it."

"Brother," said the first man, "make it twenty, and feel it; the blessing comes when you feel it."

These people gave until they felt it, and they had to pray the apostle to receive their gifts. It would be a great treat to get to the place where that would be the case. It seems that at Macedonia the apostle just mentioned the need, and then we read, "Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."

In the next verse you can see how they did it. "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." You see, if I have given myself to the Lord, the rest all follows.

Naught that I have my own I call,
I hold it for the Giver;
My heart, my strength, my life, my all,
Are His, and His forever.

And so, because they insisted, he says that he has asked Titus to go on to the Corinthians and get their gift, and add it to that of the Macedonians.

"Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." In other words, you with your fine homes, you with your elegant dress, with all your privileges, you have everything your heart could wish, you who believe that business is business, now see that you abound in this grace also, see that you are just as rich in the grace of giving as in anything else. "I speak not by commandment," I am not commanding you. I am not going to order you to give. This is the dispensation of the grace of God. "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love." In other words, I am trying to make you ashamed as I tell you what others have done, and he points them to the supreme example of self-abnegation. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." How can I speak of following Him, how can I speak of being saved by His grace, if I do not seek to imitate Him in His self-denying concern for those in need? He saw me in my deep, deep need, and He came all the way from His home in heaven, laying aside the glory that He had with the Father from eternity, down to the depths of Calvary's anguish—and to the darkness of the tomb.

He who was rich for my sake became poor, that through His poverty I might be enriched through eternity. And He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.

Notice, Paul never asked for money for himself. Even when he was laboring in Corinth he said, "I robbed other churches . . . to do you service" (11:8). Other churches sent their missionary money to him, but now that they are Christians he does not want them to forget their responsibilities. He never asks anything for himself, and the true servant of Christ is not going to try to stir people up to do for him, but he will be concerned for the needs of others. Paul would never beg for himself, but he had no shame about pleading most earnestly for others when occasion arose.

"Herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have." And then verse 12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." It was not a question of saying, "Well, I would do something but am not able," but a question of doing what they could. If you can give only a little to the Lord, give that, and He will multiply it. If you can give a great deal, give it to Him. He looks into the heart. Many a one puts in a dime, and on the books of heaven it goes down as though it were a dollar, but do not put in a dime if you could give the dollar, for that won't go down at all!

"I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." Someday things may change; someday it may be the Corinthians who will be in poverty, and the Jerusalem saints may be sending to minister to them in their need, but give as unto the Lord, because it is written in the Old Testament, and this refers to the manna, "He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack." You remember it was God who gave the manna, and He said, Just gather for your need. A man may have said, "Well, I am going to gather in while the gathering is good. Bring out all the pots and pails and the wash-tub, and I will fill them," and he might have had enough to last him a month. But the next morning when he went to look at it, he would find that it had bred worms and was worthless. If he did not use what he got from day to day it went for nothing, but if he got just a little it saw him through. After all, you can only use so much of this world's goods; use the surplus to the glory of God and the blessing of a needy world.

In verse 16 to the end of the chapter he shows the importance of carefully handling funds that are entrusted to the church. I think that a great many otherwise well-meaning servants of Christ have failed tremendously right along this line. They gather vast sums of money, making themselves responsible for its use, and no one ever knows whether it has been used in the way promised. The apostle says there should never be anything like that. You must handle the funds in such a way that they can be checked up, and people may know that everything has been used aright. And so the apostle would not touch a penny of it, but said, "We will appoint accredited men to look after it," and he appointed two unnamed brethren and his friend, Titus, as a committee to handle all the money, to pay it out and to give an account of everything.

"But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you." Paul had urged Titus to do this work, but he was also anxious to do it of his own accord; he was glad to take up this service. And then we read, "And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches." This brother's name is not given but they knew him well, for he was chosen by the church. "And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind." And why did they do this? "Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us." In other words, he did not want anybody to be able to say, "Oh, Paul is gathering in a great deal of money. Who knows what he is doing with it! First thing we know he will be coming out with some very expensive equipage that he has bought out of that money."

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." The Lord knows what we do with the money, but he says, "That is not enough; we want God's people to know also." And then, in addition to Titus and this brother, Paul had sent another one. The testimony of two men is true, we read, but it is written, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. 18:16). "And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you." He found a man who was an expert in business matters, and says, "We have sent him along too."

And then he gives a little word of commendation of these brethren. "Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the apostles of the churches [the word *messenger* there is the word *apostle*], and the glory of Christ. Wherefore show ye

to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf." The proof of love is in giving. We say we are interested in missions—prove it by giving. We say we are interested in poor saints—prove it by giving. We say we are interested in supporting the Lord's work—prove it by giving. God gave—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Christ so loved the church that He gave Himself for it, and now we who through grace know God as our Father and Christ as our Savior are called upon to show our love by giving.

LECTURE 16

CHRISTIAN GIVING

2 Corinthians 9:1–15

For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (as it is written, He hath dispersed abroad;

he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. (vv. 1–15)

In this chapter the Spirit of God brings before us in a very impressive manner our responsibility, as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, to give of our means both for the support of the Lord's work and in order to meet the necessities of Christians who are in distressing circumstances.

It was given to our Lord Jesus to enjoy in a way peculiarly rich and full the happiness of giving. He through whom all things came into being, and for whom they all exist, came into this lower part of His creation, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. The apostle Paul, in addressing the Ephesian elders, calls upon them to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). This naturally raises the question when, and under what circumstances, did He so speak? And at first perhaps one is surprised to find that the four Gospels will be searched in vain to locate any such expression. In other words, the inspired records of the life and sayings of our blessed Lord do not tell us that He used these words on any occasion. And yet the apostle quotes them as though they were well known, as undoubtedly they were, and had frequently been used by the Savior in the days of His flesh. In fact the tense of the original suggests frequent repetition, and we might render the passage as follows: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He was wont to say, It is more blessed to give than to receive." That is, it was customary with Him to so speak. He used the words so frequently that His inspired biographers did not even find it necessary to quote them, but wherever His disciples went—those who had known Him on earth—they carried with them this little bit of personal recollection; and so the story went every where in the early church, that it was a frequent thing for the Lord to use the words Paul referred to.

What light this throws upon His character, and how it emphasizes the deep-toned joy He found in imparting good to others. "More blessed" is really "happier"; so that we are justified in reading, "It is happier to give than to receive." He never gave grudgingly. To Him it was a joy to share with those in need. He delighted in communicating the riches of His grace to poverty-stricken, bankrupt souls. Doubtless, often as He fed the multitudes, healed the sick, or ministered in some other way to human need, He would turn to the disciples nearest Him and say quietly and with a sense of deep satisfaction, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The Holy Spirit would have us take His example and His words to heart. We are naturally so self-centered that we are inclined to believe the greatest happiness is found in receiving rather than in giving. We all enjoy receiving gifts. We delight in receiving praise, love, and adulation. We sometimes imagine that if everything that our hearts crave could be poured out upon us, we would be supremely happy. But this is a total mistake. The happiest people in the world are those who give most unselfishly; and herein lies the challenge to Christians everywhere to whom God has entrusted the means of furthering His interests in the world by financial gifts. Those who go forth for the name's sake of the Lord Jesus, leaving home and loved ones, leaving too all opportunity of earning a livelihood and accumulating wealth, should be in a very special way objects of interest to those who would enjoy the blessedness of which the Lord Jesus speaks. In 3 John, we note the commendation of the aged apostle to the Elder Gaius. He writes, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth" (3 John 5-8). Undoubtedly the reference was primarily to traveling preachers of the gospel, those whom we call missionaries. Unable to provide for themselves, they were cast entirely upon the Lord, and He on His part met their needs through the gracious gifts of faithful Christians in the home churches, who found real joy in this delightful fellowship. Shall we not ask ourselves to what extent we have entered into the mind of Christ in regard to this gracious ministry? Are we too experiencing the joy that comes through giving as enabled by God, in order that His servants may be maintained in the path of usefulness in lands far away where they know little of Christian fellowship, but often experience much in the way of testing and hardship? We need never fear that as we open our hearts and purses to

them, we ourselves will be permitted to suffer, for we can be certain that God will be no man's debtor.

It never was loving that emptied a heart,
Or giving that emptied a purse.

And we may recall John Bunyan's lines in the immortal allegory:

A man there was, though some did count him mad,
The more he cast away, the more he had.

For after all, this is but to say in another manner what God Himself has already told us in His own Holy Word, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."

With these thoughts in mind, let us notice how earnestly the apostle Paul stresses the importance of this ministry of giving. He says in verses 1-2: "For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many." You see, a year before they had pledged themselves to give for this fund that Paul was raising, and now he is asking them to fulfill the pledges. "Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting." You get the point; do you not? He had gone through the churches of Macedonia urging them to have part in this bounty they were raising for the poor saints in Palestine, and he told them that those in Corinth had already pledged themselves to do something generous, but there had been no cash money, and so he was coming through their district on his way to Jerusalem and he did not want them to make him ashamed. He did not wish to urge and beg them to fulfill their promise, but he desired to show the Macedonian brethren how prompt they were to pay. "Therefore," he says, "I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness." That last expression appears to be a little difficult. The word for "covetousness" might just as truly be translated "extortion." He would have the visiting brethren gather up this sum when they reached Corinth, so that it might not seem as if he had to come to them as

a tax-collector, trying to force them to give what they had already promised. He wanted it to be glad, joyous giving, the kind that would glorify the Lord.

“He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” And so he uses a common truism to illustrate a great spiritual reality. Think of a farmer so foolish, as he goes forth to sow his wheat, as to say, “It is too bad to sow so much to an acre; I think I can get a fair crop by sowing less.” Such conduct would be absurd. So it is with us. If we want God’s blessing on our work, if we want Him to visit us with power and to be generous with us, we must care for the needs of others. There is an old proverb that has been used so long that it is shiny at the knees and frayed at the edges. It is this: “Charity begins at home.” People say you must think of home first, and then if you have anything left, give to others or to foreign missions. Giving to missions is not charity. It is not almsgiving when I contribute of my means in order to carry the gospel to a dying world. It is for this purpose God has left us here in this scene. We make a great mistake in talking about home missions and foreign missions. This world is a foreign land to which our blessed Lord came, and from over yonder He sends us forth to go to all nations to carry this gospel to the very ends of the earth. We want to multiply our efforts a thousandfold by backing up those who go into the regions beyond. Paul, of course, was referring specially to caring for the poor, but the same principle applies to both.

Now notice the state of the heart that God takes into account when it comes to giving. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart.” Someone says he does not believe in making a pledge. What is a pledge? It is the expression of the purpose of your heart. The apostle says, writing by the Spirit of God, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give.” Purpose in your heart, then give; “not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” You say, “Well, I presume they will think it strange if I do not give anything. So I suppose I had better give a little.” Do not give so—“not grudgingly.” He does not want one penny from you if you had rather keep it yourself. God does not want your money if you give it grudgingly or of necessity. “Well,” you say, “I think I ought to give. I suppose God holds me responsible and I will have to give.” No, no, “not of necessity.” God gave freely, gladly. And He does not want anything from you unless you also give willingly and gladly; unless you are thankful to be able to give. “For God loveth a cheerful giver.” The word in the Greek is *hilaron*, and may be translated “hilarious.” God loves a hilarious giver. Not a giver who says, “Dear me, they are always needing money.” But one who says, “What is that? Another opportunity to give to missions! Another chance to help

the needy! Well, bless the Lord! What can I give? Yes, I think I can double that." That is a hilarious giver, a cheerful giver.

And the Lord will never be your debtor if you give like that. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." You see, you take the right attitude toward God and His Word, and He will take a wonderfully benevolent attitude toward you. Then Paul quotes from Psalm 112, "He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever." In that psalm God is depicting the typically righteous man. One characteristic is, he is interested in other people. He disperses abroad. He gives to the poor. Righteousness, you know, means consistency with the relationship in which we stand. Now, how can we act consistently if we are neglectful of our attitude toward those in distress and toward the servants of Christ?

"Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." God knows you need these things and He will look after you. Righteousness and liberality go together. "Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God." It begins with God and ends with God. God is able to make all grace abound toward you as you give of your substance to Him. You give to sustain His servants in distant fields. They are blessed and return thanks to God, and that blessing comes back to you. All the rivers run into the sea; the moisture is caught up from the sea into the clouds; the water comes down on the land from the clouds, and the rivers carry it to the sea again, and so there is a never-failing circle of blessing.

"Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men." Notice, it is "your professed subjection unto the gospel." It is one thing to say we believe the gospel, but if we say we believe it is the only way for sinful men to come to God, surely we will try to get the gospel out to men.

"And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." This Gift is Christ Himself, and He is absolutely beyond all our powers to properly appreciate.

LECTURE 17

PAUL VINDICATES HIS APOSTLESHIP

2 Corinthians 10:1–18

Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: but I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's. For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. For his letters, say they, are weighty and

powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present. For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. (vv. 1-18)

What a very practical portion of the Word of God this is, and how grateful we can be for some of the unpleasant experiences that came to the apostle Paul, because of the lessons that we may glean from his attitude regarding them. He had ministered, as we have seen, for a long time in this famous Greek city. For a year and six months he had worked and prayed and toiled, laboring with his own hands to support himself and those associated with him, while he preached publicly and from house to house, striving to reach lost sinners and bring them to Christ, and once they were saved, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. He had seen the work grow and develop in a marvelous way. He had seen men of marked ability come in among them who could build them up, and then, as a true missionary, he had left them and moved on to other fields, that he might still carry the gospel to those who had not heard it. And now having been away from them, he had learned of a preconcerted movement among certain enemies of the gospel of the grace of God to try to turn his own converts away from confidence in him as an inspired and duly authorized apostle, in order that thereby they might weaken the faith of those converts in the glorious declaration of the grace of God which he had proclaimed. Paul here had to insist very strongly upon the authority that had been given him. He had to defend his apostleship, to magnify his office. And though it was the very last thing he delighted to do, he had to call attention to the work that God had wrought through him and

show that he was truly a sent-one of Christ. They had seen a lowly tentmaker, his hands often begrimed with toil. They had seen him put away his rough garments to get ready for a preaching service, and go down to the meeting place to minister Christ after his working hours.

They had seen a common workingman, and now they used this against him. "Why," they said, "he is not an apostle, a man who exists in the lowly way he lives. How ordinary, how commonplace, his calling is from day to day! Do you call *him* an apostle? Do others of the apostles of Jesus Christ have to work as he does, with their own hands?" And so they despised him the more because of his very humility. He replies, "I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." What did they think of Christ? He was a carpenter and used the saw, the hammer, and the adze in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, and took the lowest place here on earth that He might exalt us to the highest. Well, by His meekness, by His gentleness, I "who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: . . . I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh." You see, he had to write them a very strong letter in order to point out and reprove serious things that were being done in the church at Corinth. There was party strife there and, among other things, they were setting one servant of God against another. Some were saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," and others were declaring, "We alone are of Christ." And Paul had to rebuke all that and rebuke it sternly. And then there were brethren going to law one with another, and there were other things that had to be dealt with, and so his letters were sharp and strong. But now he has to deal with those who are his detractors. They were saying, "It is all right, he can sit down in the privacy of his own study and write boldly, but if he had to meet you face to face, he would not dare to talk like that." And Paul says, as it were, "I hope there will not be any occasion for it. I write you a letter rather than to come to see you, because I do not want to have to say these stern things to you: I love you too tenderly to wish to hurt you. I thought I might help you with my letters, but if you do not respond to them I will have to tell you face to face what I mean, and show that we have divine authority backing up everything we have to say."

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." We are in the flesh, it cannot be otherwise, but, he says, we do not war according to the flesh. We are not men who, as servants of Christ, are actuated by mere fleshly motives. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." We do not behave in a fleshly way, but our weapons, which are those given us by the Holy Spirit of God, are "mighty

through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." What an ideal that is for the servant of God! The minister of Christ is not sent to preach eloquent sermons with beautiful resounding platitudes, but to give men the truth of God; and the effect of this truth upon the conscience is intended to bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ, that all human reasoning may come to an end when God speaks, and that there may be absolute subjection to His will. If you are not ready to obey the Word of God, then I have to be in readiness to revenge every disobedience, he says.

Next he warns them against looking on the outward appearance. I judge Paul's physical appearance was not that of a great statesman or a great leader. The Greeks particularly admired splendid physique, as we may see from the many magnificent statues they have left behind. But Paul was probably a very small man. The name *Paul* means "little one," and people naturally received names in those days that intimated what they were. His outward appearance was weak and his speech contemptible. It may be there was a hesitancy in his speech, caused possibly when he was stoned at Lystra, and perhaps he could not speak with freedom or fluency. So they despised him because of physical infirmities. But that little man, though physically weak, was filled with the power of the Spirit of God, and through that power had done wonderful things for Christ, and so he could say, "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's." In other words, "I am not much to look at, but I belong to Christ just as much as the fine-looking teachers with heroic figures. I am His servant, and He uses me in spite of my physical infirmity. It is He Himself who has given me direct authority." "Though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction." He would not claim authority in order to avenge himself of them, but his authority was for their blessing. In obedience to Him he had brought them the gospel, and now he desired to build them up in Christ. "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak." "Well," he says, "wait until I get there, and see." I think there is a little bit of grim humor here. I think the apostle rather smiled as he wrote the next verse: "Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present." We dare not compare ourselves with others, saying, "Well, I can do it better than someone else." Paul says, "No, that is not it. It is not a question merely whether I am able to preach better than others or not. We are all

Christ's servants." "We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not [intelligent]." It is a very foolish thing to compare or contrast ourselves with others. To every man his work. Every servant of God has some special gift. Whitefield said, "Other men may preach the gospel better than I can, but no man can preach a better gospel."

But now the apostle says, "I have had one definite aim and nothing is going to turn me aside from that." "We will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you." *Rule* might be translated "canon." Canon law is the law or rule by which churches are governed. Paul seems to say, "This is the canon that God has given me, a measure to reach even unto you, and that is, that we should preach the gospel in the regions beyond." He says, "My rule as a missionary is not to be occupied so much with churches already established, and certainly not to go where other men have labored, and then add my little to it. I do not want to build on another man's foundation. But my business is to preach the gospel where Christ is not named." It is not wrong to build on other men's foundations. I stand here today, and what am I doing? Well, the best I can do is to build on other men's foundations. But Paul recognizes that. He says, "I have laid the foundation, and another [man] buildeth thereon." But he declares, "My rule is not to build on other men's foundations." He was a foundation layer. He went from country to country, from city to city, from village to village, carrying the gospel of the grace of God. He sought to lead souls out of darkness, who had never heard the message of light before. Then he would gather them together by the Spirit's power into little groups. We hear that word *indigenous* used so much these days, referring to missionary work. The natives are encouraged to establish "indigenous churches." This was Paul's mode of operation. He had preached at Corinth, and away he went. Other men could come now and build them up, but he must carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. What a missionary Paul was! He was a pattern foreign missionary for our entire age. There have been many since then who have gone forth in the same spirit that actuated him. This is the business of the church, and if we cannot all go, we can help those to go who are free to do it, and we can pray and give that they may work on unhindered by want. We are not, says Paul, "to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Whether one is building on another man's foundation or seeking to tell men and women in distant lands of Christ, it is all the same: "He that glorieth, let him glory in

the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." Here, then, is the ideal missionary as exemplified in the life of the apostle Paul. May we all in some measure at least enter into it. How wonderfully Paul sought to follow his Master. He said, "Follow me, as I follow Christ." Christ came from the heights of glory down into the depths of sin and woe, and He trod the path of humiliation and shame, and at last went to the cross and there gave His life for the redemption of guilty men. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

LECTURE 18

ESPOUSED TO CHRIST

2 Corinthians 11:1–15

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chieftest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome

unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (vv. 1-15)

There is nothing to stir the heart to worship like contemplation of the Word of God. Satan has done his best to rob us of this treasure, but we can thank God that it has been preserved to us all down through the ages. God's Word is like Himself, it is perfect. We read, "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. 12:6).

Now the special verses I want to reread are 2-3: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

We have often heard the saying, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and we need to remember that in these days, when there are so many different forces seeking to destroy our liberty here in America, when Communism is proposing license instead of liberty, and when others would propose a kind of a dictatorship instead of liberty, we ought to be very grateful to God for the privileges we have enjoyed, and as a people we should be watchful and careful lest our liberties be fritted away. But it is just as true that eternal vigilance is the price we must pay for maintaining the truth of God. There are many evil forces at work seeking to turn the Christian away from the revelation that God has given in His Word. We need not be surprised at this, for it has always been so. Just as soon as God began to work in any dispensation, Satan, the adversary, attempted to discredit the truth divinely revealed. In the former dispensation the conflict was between the revelation given through prophets and priests at Sinai and through God's servants throughout the centuries on the one hand, and idolatry of all kinds on the other. All through the Christian dispensation the conflict has been between a pure, clear, gospel testimony and the different substitutes that the adversary of our souls has presented to men, to turn them away from the simplicity that is in

Christ. The apostle Paul had to meet this. We have already seen in these Corinthian letters how his steps were dogged by those who sought to turn his converts away from the message that he brought to them of salvation by grace alone, to something that would obscure the preciousness of that grace. Now in this chapter Paul is obliged to stoop to something that is very distasteful to him, because of the false accusations which were being made to destroy the confidence of the saints in their teacher, in order that they might refuse the teaching. If the Devil cannot induce people immediately to give up some line of truth, then he will attack those whom God has sent forth to defend that truth. He tried to make Paul's converts lose confidence in their teacher, in his spirituality, in his understanding of the truth, in order to discredit his ministry. These men who wickedly opposed Paul's work ridiculed him and made the most unkind remarks, even in regard to his personal appearance and ability. They charged that he was not fit to be a leader of God's people, that he was not an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ because he was not one of the original twelve, that he had not received his commission from Christ because it did not come through the twelve. They put him down as a freelance. They would have the people believe he was actuated by selfish motives, that he was endeavoring to make a gain of those to whom he ministered. He indignantly refuted such charges. He disliked doing this; he did not enjoy having to defend himself. The man of God would be content to simply go on preaching the Word of God and never mention himself, but here it became necessary. The Corinthians were losing confidence in their teacher, and if they lost confidence in him, they would lose confidence also in that glorious message which he had been appointed to carry through the world. He speaks of his defense as foolishness. He would rather speak of Christ. The reason he gives is, "I am jealous [for] you with godly jealousy." There is a jealousy that is condemnable, the jealousy that one teacher might have of another. Servants of Christ become jealous of each other, and those who help in the Lord's work become jealous of each other, and Sunday school teachers become jealous of each other. All such jealousy is opposed to the Holy Spirit of God. But there is a jealousy that is pure, that is clean, that is right, and it is the kind of jealousy that God Himself cherishes. He says, "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." What does He mean? What does Paul mean? He means that he cannot bear to see his brethren turn from God to false gods because he knows that it is to their eternal ruin if they do. His jealousy is not because of self-love, but because of his love for them. What would you think of a husband who says of his wife, "I have absolutely no jealousy when she is petted by another man?" There is a jealousy, you see, that is right, and a true, upright husband wants his wife to be faithful to

him, as he feels himself responsible to be true and faithful to her. And so our God desires to see His people true to Him and walking apart from the fellowship of the world. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God."

Paul says to these Corinthians, "I am jealous over you." He did not want to see them drifting away, turning aside, following things that could not profit, and he did not want them to lose the preciousness of their first love. He wished to see them ever true to Christ. His was a godly jealousy, a jealousy like the jealousy of God. "For I have espoused you to one husband." They were, as an assembly of God, like an engaged maiden. They had been espoused to one husband, even Christ. The marriage supper and the Lamb were yonder in the glory and they were waiting for His return. Christ is the espoused husband of the church. He died for us, and we belong to Him, and our hearts must be true to Him. Paul did not want to see them become errant and unfaithful. He wished to be able to say at the judgment seat of Christ, "Blessed Master, here are those whom I won for Thee, and their hearts have been true to Thee, and now they are here to be eternally united with Thee in the glory." He was afraid that this might not be. There were agencies at work seeking to hinder this. So he says, "I am afraid lest by any means Satan should beguile you through subtlety." That is how the Devil works. Satan never says, "Good morning, I am the Devil! I want to mislead you, I want to seduce you, I want to turn your heart away from God, I want to ruin you for time and eternity." No, he comes with the fairest pretences and promises, and he endeavors to turn the heart away from Christ by deception. He deceived Eve. He has been deceiving mankind all down through the centuries. "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Do you know this? God's truth is always manifested right on the very surface of His Word. Wherever people have to enter into a long course of argument in order to support a system which they are trying to foist on the saints, it is not the truth of God. Anything not characterized by a holy simplicity is not God's testimony. And so, young saint, test every teaching by searching the Word, and if you do not find it plainly revealed in the Book, reject all unscriptural reasoning, no matter how learned may be the man who does the reasoning.

And Paul says to these Corinthians, "If these men really came to bring you something better, you might well listen to them." They came to drag them down to a lower level, to turn their hearts away from Christ and to offer them a substitute, not one which was greater or better or more satisfactory than Christ, but a legal system which could only occupy them with self and fancied human merit. "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or

if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him." If one came to you and said, "I have found one better than Christ, better than Jesus," well, if he really has, you might well bear with him. But you will never find anyone better than Jesus. Jesus is God's last word to sinners and His last word to saints. I picked up a theological book the other day in which the writer said, "The time has come when we need a new investigation of the problem of Jesus Christ." Why, my dear friends, Christ is not a problem! Jesus Christ is the solution of every problem; He is the One who makes everything plain and everything clear; the One "in [whom] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Paul says, if one substitutes anything for Christ, turn a deaf ear to him. He says, if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, if anyone can tell you of any spirit greater, mightier or higher than the Holy Spirit of God, who dwells in every believer, then you might well go after him. But you will never find another, for the Holy Spirit is God Himself as truly as the Father is God, and the Son is God. Many spirits are abroad in the world who seek to impose upon men, but the Spirit of God, who dwells in the believer, is the Spirit who delights to glorify the Lord Jesus.

Then he adds, "If one come with any other gospel than that which you have received, you might bear with him." But there is only one gospel. That gospel takes on different phases at different times. It is called "the gospel of the kingdom" when the emphasis is put upon the kingly authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is called "the gospel of the grace of God" when the emphasis is put upon the sinner's salvation. It is called "the glorious gospel of God," or "the gospel of the glory of God," when the emphasis is put upon the place that the Savior now occupies. When it is called "the everlasting gospel" we think of that message that tells us there is One, and One only, through whom sinners can be reconciled to God, and that is the Lord Jesus. Writing to the Galatians, the apostle says, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." For there is no other gospel of God than the gospel of His Son, telling sinful men of the way whereby they may be justified before His face.

If, then, men have nothing else to bring, why should they want to destroy the confidence of the people in God's truth? This was a stern message which Paul did not like to deliver, but he had to explain things because of the misapprehensions and the unkind and untruthful insinuations that his enemies were instilling into the hearts and minds of his converts. "I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." He is not speaking of natural ability. What he means

is this: When it comes to service, I suppose that I was not a whit behind any of them. God had put His seal upon his ministry. He had led thousands to the Savior's feet, and yet they said he was not an apostle because he did not know Christ when He was here on earth. Paul received his apostleship directly from heaven. It was the risen Christ who appeared to him, "delivering him from the people and the Gentiles" unto whom he was sent. That was Paul's ordination to the apostleship. These Corinthians were God's seal upon his work.

"Though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge." He frankly admits that he has not the gift of eloquence. But no one could declare the truth more plainly than he. "Though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things." They knew what his life was like when he lived among them. There was one thing concerning which they found fault with him. He would not take any money from them! That is the last thing anyone would find fault with in a minister in these days! But they said that showed he could not be a real apostle. He had labored in Corinth for a year-and-a-half and he would not let them contribute anything for his support. His enemies said that if he had known that he was a real apostle he would have allowed them to support him, but he did not dare, because he was not sure of his ground. He had to explain. "Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel . . . freely?" He had entered a city which was one of the most voluptuous on the face of the earth. He said, "I will not be dependent on this people for anything." He went there to preach the gospel, and even after they professed to be the Lord's he would not let them support him. He must make them feel that everything they received from him was God's free gift, so that there would not be any idea in their hearts that he was looking for personal gain. How did he live? Well, he says, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service." In other churches they put their contributions together and sent the money down to Corinth and helped to support him, so that he might carry on his evangelistic work without asking anything, lest they should misunderstand his motives. "When I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." He made tents to support himself, and when that money was not enough, then the Lord sent it in from brethren from Macedonia, and thus in one way or another he was enabled to be independent of that critical, fault-finding group in Corinth, who might misunderstand his motives if he received their money. It is hard to please some people; you cannot do it. If you talk loudly

they do not like it, and if you talk softly they cannot hear. If you preach the gospel, that is too simple, and if you teach the Word it is too deep! And so Paul could not satisfy these people, but he sought to clear himself at any rate of the charge of selfishness in his testimony.

"As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia." He did not always live like this, but there were special reasons why he should do it in Achaia. Why did he do it? Because he did not love them? God knows. I remember some years ago I was out in Oregon, and there was a sterling old Hollander and his fine family of ten sons and one daughter, who attended nearly all the meetings; and this dear man did not have any assurance of salvation. He was doing his very best to please God. He was trying to keep the law, and he was hoping to get the testimony in some way of his election and know he was saved. I tried to open up the truth of salvation by grace for all who believe. The old man would listen, but he thought it was too easy. I was invited to his home for dinner, and afterward we sat down over an open Bible, and I tried to show him that he could be saved in a moment by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus, but he was so occupied with hyper-Calvinism that he could not see the simple truth and rest in Christ his Savior. After four hours I was leaving, and just as I was turning away the dear old man—with his long beard he looked like Paul Krueger—reached in his pocket and offered me a gift of five dollars. I said, "Tell me, are you giving that out of love for Christ, or are you giving it to try to help buy your salvation?" He looked at me a moment or two and he said, "I don't love Christ, I wish I did." I said, "Keep your five dollars. I appreciate your kindness in offering it, but I do not want you to get the idea that there is anything meritorious about giving money to a servant of Christ." They told me afterward that he went to his room and cried like a child. Two years later I came back, and I shall never forget the night he came up to me and said, "I love the Lord Jesus; I have trusted Him as my Savior; I know I am His. Will you take the five dollars now?" I took it and was glad to try to use it for the Lord Jesus Christ.

That was Paul's idea. The Corinthians had the wrong attitude about money. Paul did not want their money for himself. "But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." I gather from this that these false teachers were quite eager for financial gain. Paul took the opposite attitude. Then again, these false teachers spoke well, they seemed in most things to be very much like real servants of Christ. How do you detect them? By the

message they bring. If they do not preach the truth of God they are not Christ's apostles. But they seem to be nice men; they speak so graciously and eloquently; they are personally so attractive. The apostle says, "No marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." He does not come to men in the crude way we usually see him pictured, with horns and a tail and hoofs. Why, such a Devil would not lead anyone astray! But a Devil who comes as an angel of light, with kindly, soft, tender words and dulcet tones—that is the kind of Devil that deceives people.

And so Paul says, if "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light . . . it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Did you notice that expression, "his ministers?" Does Satan have ministers? Does the Devil have ministers? Yes, that is what Paul says. A man may be cultured and refined and ordained to the ministerial office and profess to teach the Word of God, but all the time he may be Satan's appointee. How can we tell Satan's ministers from Christ's ministers? In one simple way, Paul says. There need be no difficulty about it. If they are Satan's they may talk a great deal about human righteousness, but one thing they do not talk about. Satan's ministers have nothing to say about the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's ministers are like the bride in the Song of Solomon. The bridegroom says to her, "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet." The true servant of Christ has lips that speak of the blood of Jesus. He points sinners to that atoning blood through which alone guilty men may be saved. No matter how much one may insist on righteousness, personal, civic, or national, if he fails to present to men salvation through the precious, cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is one of Satan's ministers. For God has no other message for lost men than that which is linked with the work of Calvary's cross.

LECTURE 19

PAUL'S SUFFERINGS FOR CHRIST

2 Corinthians 11:16–33

I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false

brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands. (vv. 16-33)

I confess to you that when I read words like these, I cannot get away from the thought that in all the nearly fifty years that I have known Christ as my Savior, and during almost all that time I have been trying to preach His Word, I have just been playing at Christianity. When I think what this dear servant of God of the first century went through for Christ, motivated by a consuming love for the Savior, I feel that I have a great deal to learn of what it means to be a true minister of the Lord Jesus.

We have already noticed in the study of this letter that there were those who were very jealous of the ministry of the apostle Paul. They would have crowded him out of the various churches had it been possible, they even ignored him in order to prejudice those who had gladly received him as the servant of the Lord. On some occasions, while not exactly stooping to evil-speaking, they had endeavored to insinuate that he had no true ground for counting himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, that after all he was merely an ecclesiastical freelance and that his words should not be accepted, as those of the original twelve apostles, as really inspired of God. It was because of all this, because his own converts were being distressed and upset by such things, that he found it necessary to direct attention to the marks of his apostleship. He seeks to show that God Himself has put His stamp on his ministry by permitting him to suffer for Christ's sake.

Notice first his boasting. He says in verses 16-21: "Let no man think me a fool." That is, there were those who would imply that he was simply imagining that he had had a divine commission, that he was just a simpleton and did not know the difference between an idle dream and a heavenly vision, between the direct call of God and the moving of his own human spirit. "Let no man think me a fool"—I am not as simple as that; and yet he is saying, "If you do, well, then receive me on that ground, and give me a chance to indulge in a little bit of foolishness in talking about myself." He was altogether at home when speaking

of Christ, but when he had to speak of himself, it was most distasteful, and he considered it as mere foolishness. Yet it seemed necessary, in order to clear up this particular difficulty. "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord" (he was not speaking as though by direct command of God but foolishly, as it were,) "in this confidence of boasting." Others had come to these Corinthians who boasted of their lineage and of their graces and abilities and gifts, and Paul says, "Since you like to hear that kind of thing, I will give you a little of it." "Ye suffer fools gladly." In other words, the man who spends time talking about himself is a fool; you have had some of that, and you seemed to enjoy it, and so I am going to give you a little more of it. "Seeing ye yourselves are wise." That was a bit of irony. You Corinthians are so remarkably wise that you can let some of the rest of us indulge ourselves. "For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face." Paul says, if you can stand that, you can stand it if I tell you a little of my personal experiences and of the Lord's dealings with me.

"I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit where-insoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also." There were those who had a great deal to say about their credentials. He too had something to say along that line, and so he went on to tell them something about his lineage. Those who came troubling them were as a rule Jews who had made a profession of Christianity, but had never broken with the old system and come out into the full place of the new covenant. They boasted of the fact that they were real Hebrews of Abraham's seed, and Paul asks what have they to boast of over himself? "Are they Hebrews? so am I. . . . Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I." I wonder whether this message is going into the homes of any Jewish families. I am quoting the words of an eminent Hebrew Christian of nineteen hundred years ago, one of the most highly educated rabbis of his day, a man brought up at the feet of the Rabbi Gamaliel, noted for his sanity and sound orthodoxy. This man, Paul, once called Saul of Tarsus, was of all the Jews of his day the man who had the most bitter hatred against Christianity; but something happened to him that made him the outstanding apostle of the new doctrine of the grace of God, and he is telling us something here of what he endured for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes people say that certain persons change their religion for temporal benefit. It was not a question of changing religion for Paul, but of getting to know the living Christ. And it was not for temporal benefit, for had he remained as he was he would have lived and died as one of the most honored Hebrews of his time. He knew when he confessed Christ Jesus as his Savior that he would be put out of the synagogue, that his own friends would disown him, look upon him as though dead, and yet he decided to endure

it all for Christ's sake. He says, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:7). This man was genuine. Something had taken place in his inner life that made him step right out from Judaism and commit himself to the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior.

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more." Do others boast that they are ministers of Christ? I too am a minister of Christ, and my ministry has been a wider one than theirs. He is not saying, "I am a greater minister, a greater teacher, a greater preacher." What he is saying is this, "I have laboured more abundantly [than all the rest of them]." He had gone from city to city, from country to country, and from continent to continent, giving the glad, glorious message of the grace of God. None of them had excelled him in this or had come near him in time spent and places visited and multitudes preached to. Then he tells how he has suffered for his ministry: "In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." When you turn to the book of Acts you read once of his being beaten with stripes, but he says, "In stripes above measure." Just once you read of his being in prison, but he says, "In prisons more frequent." We do not get the entire record in Acts. "In deaths oft." He passed through experiences again and again that were harder to bear than dying for Christ would have been.

Then notice the pathos of this, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one." That was the discipline of the Jewish synagogue. He could have been free of that. When they summoned him for trial on these five occasions, it was by the elders of the synagogue who charged him with teaching things contrary to the law of Moses, and they condemned him to be beaten with forty stripes save one. That was the Jewish way of disciplining those who were adjudged guilty of violation of the law. They were afraid that they might exceed the legal requirements, for God had said that they were not to be unmerciful, and so they gave thirteen stripes on one side, thirteen on the other, and thirteen down the middle of the back. That was the way they beat one who had broken the law of Moses. If Paul had said, "You have no authority over me; I am a Christian, and you cannot judge me and pronounce sentence upon me; I will appeal to Rome," he could have been free from all this. He did this when Caesar's own officers would have violated the law, but when his own brethren, the Jews, pronounced judgment against him, he bowed his head and took it because of his love for them.

He said, "I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews" (1 Cor. 9:20). If you want to see how much Paul loved the Jews, you can do so there as you see him tied to that post, with his back bare. Notice his quivering flesh as the thongs come down upon him. And he could have been delivered from it all if he had simply said, "I am no longer a Jew; I am a Christian." But although he was a

Christian he could not forget that by birth he was a Jew, and he loved his people. We hear him say on another occasion, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). And so he even bore the synagogue's discipline in order that he might not be alienated from the people he loved and served and suffered for, "that they might be saved."

Then he goes on to tell of what he endured from the Gentiles. "Thrice was I beaten with rods." That was the Roman punishment. "Once was I stoned"; that was at Lystra. "Thrice I suffered shipwreck." You read of his being shipwrecked once in the book of Acts, but there were two more such experiences. "A night and a day I have been in the deep." I suppose the vessel had gone to pieces, and he was floating about clinging to a spar. No one was near, but he was looking to God, and in some way deliverance came. All these things failed to quench that burning ardor that sent him through the world for a generation proclaiming salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there were other perils that he suffered. They were eightfold as given in verse 26. "In perils of robbers," that was a very real peril in those days when robbers beset every mountain path, and Paul traveled from city to city mostly on foot. "In perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen." The Jews hated him, and the Gentile world failed to appreciate the fact that he was God's ambassador to them. "In perils in the city," among the cultured and refined as well as among the uncouth and the ignorant. "In perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." This last is perhaps the saddest of all. Those professing the name of Christ and yet untrue to him, those taking the ground of being servants of God and yet showing themselves false brethren, who would have destroyed his good name if they could.

And then he continues, "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness." Whatever have you and I known of suffering anywhere near like this? We have sung sometimes, but I wonder whether we really mean it:

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
 All to leave and follow Thee;
 Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
 Thou, from hence, my all shall be;
 Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
 All I've sought, and hoped, and known;
 Yet how rich is my condition,
 God and heav'n are still my own.

Do we really mean it when we sing such a song as this? Are we prepared thus to suffer and endure for Christ's sake? This is first-century Christianity, this is what it cost to be true to God in those early days, and yet how faithful God's servants were that we might have this wondrous heritage of the truth today.

But there was another thing that weighed upon him, and only one having the oversight in the church of God could know the meaning of this: "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Paul carried the people of God upon his heart. He could not go into a place and labor for a while and then be through with them. They were still on his heart, and if they got into trouble, into difficulty, into dissension, it burdened him, and he took it to God and wrote letters to them and tried to help and bless. And now he says, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" That is, if someone who should know better stumbles one of the weakest, it fills me with indignation. So truly was he a father in Christ to the people of God. And he adds, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." If I must boast, I will not boast in what I have done or what I am, but "I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." Just a poor, weak, earthen vessel, and yet God has taken him up and used him to give the message of His glory to a needy world. He could boast in this, that in spite of all his weakness God had seen fit to speak in and through him.

His conclusion is very striking. You might have expected him to tell of some very remarkable experience he had had, in which God showed that, after all, it was His delight to put honor on the man who had stooped so low for the sake of Jesus, but he tells of something that most of us would have left out. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands." What a picture! And then think of the dignity of some of us. Just imagine him curled up in a basket and dropped over a wall! That is the last view we have of Paul in this chapter. Someone passing might have looked up and said, "Well, dear me, is that the Rev. Dr. Paul?" No, it is Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, who counted all things but loss for that excellent name, and is ready to be put to shame, is ready to suffer, is ready to endure, in order that Christ may be manifested in him whether by life or by death.

May God teach us who love the same Savior to emulate this His servant in

devotedness to Christ, in glorying in infirmities. Surely our Savior deserves our best and most devoted service.

Alas, and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

LECTURE 20

PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

2 Corinthians 12:1–10

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,

that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. (vv. 1–10)

We have been occupied with some of the experiences that the apostle Paul went through as he suffered for Christ's sake. You remember we are told, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). So, if we are not suffering persecution for the name of Christ, the inference is that we are not living godly. We may be behaving ourselves decently, we may be living respectably, but God does not have the supreme place in our lives if we do not know something of persecution on the part of a world that hates God and that nailed His own blessed Son to the bitter cross.

Paul had identified himself with that cross from the moment of his conversion. He said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). Naturally, the world hated the man that spurned it. Walk with the world and the world loves its own. Jesus said, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7). And so the apostle lived and toiled and suffered for an entire generation for the name's sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it was not all suffering. There were times of ecstatic joy, there were moments of wonderful blessing and spiritual refreshment. Did others boast of religious experiences? Well, Paul says, if it is the fashion to boast, I suppose I can boast too. I do not want to boast of myself, but I can tell you, if you want to know, something of the great privileges that at times have come to me.

"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations [or manifestations] of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ." He is referring, of course, to himself, but what a wonderful thing to be able to speak as "a man in Christ." Do you know "a man in Christ," in that sense? You remember on one occasion, writing to the Romans, the apostle speaks of some of his own kinsmen, and uses that expression, "Who also were in Christ before me." You see, people are not in Christ by natural birth. You are not in Christ because your father was in Christ before you were born. You are not in Christ because you have had a praying mother. You yourself have to be born of God. Unless regenerated you are not in Christ up to this present moment. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). It may be very attractive flesh, it may be very agreeable flesh, it may even be religious flesh, but it is flesh still. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is the man who is

born of the Spirit who is in Christ, and so Paul says, I have told you something of the hardships I have endured for Jesus' sake, now I want to tell you something of a great experience that came to me once as a man in Christ.

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago." That is very interesting. This man had had a remarkable experience, and as far as we can learn he had kept it a secret between himself and God for over fourteen years. This is very unlike us. I have an idea, knowing myself as well as I do, that if I had been in the third heaven yesterday, I should be telling you about it this morning. I would forget everything else and tell you what a wonderful time I had in the third heaven, and then if you believed me, you would look at me and say, "What a saint he must be that God should want his company in the third heaven!" and I would be getting glory to myself through telling about this. That is probably the reason Paul kept it a secret; he did not want people to think of him. He did not mind telling of the hard things; he did not mind speaking of the time when he was ignominiously let down over a wall in a basket. That was something that people would sneer at, laugh at, but such a wonderful experience as being caught up into the third heaven he could keep to himself until the proper time. But if others are boasting of experiences, he will tell them of his own. I do not know what attention you may have given to the chronology in connection with the apostle Paul's life. A little over fourteen years before he wrote this second letter to the Corinthians he was laboring in Galatia. He visited the cities of Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra, and the people were so carried away by him that at one time they wanted to worship him as a god, but later persecution broke out, and they turned on him and actually sought to stone him to death. In fact, the moment came when his crushed and bruised body fell in the highway, and as far as anybody could see he was dead, and they dragged him out of the city and threw that body to one side as a bit of worthless refuse. That was apparently the end of the apostle Paul so far as his ministry was concerned. But after his persecutors had gone back into the city, a little group of heartbroken disciples gathered about that body, and one can imagine how desolate they felt. Their father in Christ, the one who had led them to know Christ, who had cared for them in the things of God, lay before them evidently dead, and they were about to make arrangements for a decent burial, when suddenly Paul rose up and gladdened their hearts by what must have seemed like a veritable resurrection. He was ready to go back to the business of preaching the gospel.

What happened to him at that time when his body lay there in a coma? I like to think that it was then he had the experience he refers to here. "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago." That was just about the time they tried to

stone him to death, and God at that time may have said, "Paul, I am going to give you a little vacation; I am going to take you up to let you see the land to which you are going. Come up with Me, Paul," and he found himself, he says, "caught up into the third heaven," and he tells us he was so enraptured by the glories that he witnessed that he was not conscious whether or not he was in the body. Observe, it is possible to be thoroughly conscious, and yet be out of the body. The body is not the real man. I am not the house in which I live. I live in this house, but someday I am going to put off this my tabernacle; I am going to move out unless it should please God that I live in the flesh until Jesus returns again. But if death takes me, the real man leaves the body. The body dies, but the believer is "absent from the body, present with the Lord." Paul had no consciousness of having a body, or on the other hand, he did not miss his body. "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth." That always helps me when I think of my loved ones gone over to the other side. They have left this scene of trial and toil and care, and have gone home to be forever with the Lord, but they are just as real, and just as truly intelligent beings out of the body and with Christ, as they were when they were down here in the body. In Ephesians 3:15 Paul speaks of "the whole family in heaven and earth." Paul was not a materialist, he was not a "soul-sleeper," for if he had been, he would have said, "The whole family in the grave and on earth," but he did not recognize any of the family as lying in the grave, it was just their bodies that were there, but the members of the family are in heaven and on earth.

Millions have reached that blissful shore,
 Their trials and their labor o'er,
 And yet there is room for millions more,

Are you on the way? Have you trusted that blessed Savior? These all died in faith, they are at home with Christ which is far better. Do you know Christ? You have often said that you hoped when life was over that you would find a place in heaven. Are you quite sure you would be comfortable there? Are you quite sure you would be happy in heaven? I know people who cannot enjoy an hour at a prayer meeting who imagine they would enjoy eternity in heaven. If you have not a new nature, a life that is hid with Christ in God, so that you can enjoy Him now and delight in fellowship with His people, how do you expect to enjoy God and fellowship with the saints in heaven? I am afraid that if some of you were suddenly caught up into heaven without any inward change, you would hardly be there before you would be seeking to get out of that holy place because

you have not a nature that is in touch with heaven. You do not appreciate the things of heaven now; how could you expect to enjoy them if you went there as you are? "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7), Jesus said. Paul was born again, he had a new life, and when he found himself in heaven he was at home there. If you were suddenly to be called away from the body, would you be going home?

A dear fellow was dying. He had been brought up in a Christian home, but he had spurned the grace of God, and someone was trying to comfort him, and leaning over him, said, "It won't be long now, and after all, death is only going home."

He looked up startled and said, "Going home! What do you mean? This is the only home I have ever known. Death for me will be going away from home, and going I do not know where."

What would it mean to you? Can you sing:
My heavenly home is bright and fair,
No pain nor death shall enter there;
Its glittering light the sun outshines,
Those heavenly mansions shall be mine.
I am going Home to die no more.

Or would death for you mean going away from home? Is this world your home, and would you be going away into the darkness and distance? Byron says, and Byron was not a Christian, "There are wanderers over the sea of eternity whose bark glides on and on and anchored ne'er shall be." Oh, can you say:

By faith in a glorified Christ on the throne,
I give up the joys of this world to its own;
As a stranger and pilgrim I plainly declare,
"My home is up yonder." But will you be there?

* * * * *

Home, Home, sweet, sweet Home,
There's no friend like Jesus,
There's no place like Home.

Paul went home for a while. He tells us in the next verse, "I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that

he was caught up into paradise.” That word is found three times in the New Testament, and is not a Greek word although written in Greek letters. *Paradise* is a Persian word, and means “a royal garden.” It was the name of the garden of the King where every lovely fruit and flower could be found, and it helps me to understand what it is like up yonder. I am glad God has given us flowers. I am glad He has given us fruit. He could have given us shade without fruit, but “He giveth us richly all things to enjoy,” and I try never to partake of the fruit of His bounty or to gaze upon the flowers of His love without being reminded of Paradise. It is intended to give us a little idea of what it is like up yonder. When we talk about the believer not loving the world, we do not mean that he should not be interested in this creation. He should love the things that God his Father has made.

Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth beneath is sweeter green,
Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen.

Birds with sweeter songs o'erflow,
Flowers with newer beauty shine,
Since I know as now I know,
I am His and He is mine.

And heaven is a place of wondrous beauty.

Paul found himself in a royal garden, and says he heard “unspeakable words.” That really means words that could not possibly be declared, words that no human tongue could make plain, the song of the redeemed, the praises of the saints, the joy of the angels. Now he says, “Of such an one will I glory,” of this man in Christ he will glory, but not of himself as a poor lost sinner. “Of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.” But why? He says, “I will tell you how I got them; my infirmities were a love gift from my Father.” I once heard of a man who was very wealthy and lived in a lovely and magnificent manor house. He had grown up away from God, and then was struck with that dread malady, paralysis, and for many years he had to be wheeled about in a chair, and as a result of that affliction, unable to get out and enjoy the things of the world, his heart turned to the things of God and he found Christ. They used to wheel him down to the gathering of the saints, and trying to half raise himself in that chair he would praise God and say, “O God, I praise Thee for my dear paralysis.” He

knew that if God had not permitted that infirmity to come upon him, he might have lived and died in independence of God.

And then Paul says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." You see, there is no danger to any one in the third heaven, but the danger comes if you have been in the third heaven and return to earth. Think of walking up and down the street saying to yourself: "I am the only man in this city who has ever been in the third heaven and come back again." Paul had been there and when he returned God said, "I must not let My servant be spoiled by this experience," and so gave him, we are told, a thorn in the flesh, but He gave it through the Devil. Do you know that Satan cannot do one thing against the child of God until the Lord gives him permission? That is the lesson of the book of Job. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Job took everything from God, and so Paul says that this was given to him lest he be exalted above measure. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." What was the thorn in the flesh? I cannot tell you because I do not know. Paul has not told us, and there is no use in our guessing about it; but I know it was in the flesh and therefore a physical infirmity. It was a weakness of some kind that pained and hurt just as though one were driving a thorn into the body, it may have been something that affected his public utterances, something humiliating, and he went to the Lord and prayed in agony of soul three times, "O Lord, deliver me from this thing." The Lord finally said, "No, Paul, I am not going to deliver you from it, but I am going to do better than that; I am going to give you grace to bear it." Oh, those unanswered prayers of our lives, how they bewilder some of us! Think of the many unanswered prayers recorded in the Bible.

Abraham prayed, "O God, that Ishmael may live before thee." Now Abraham meant, "Let him be the inheritor of the promises." But God said, "No, in Isaac shall thy seed be called." How thankful Abraham is today that his prayer was not answered. Moses prayed, "O God, let me go into the land," and God said, "Do not talk to Me about that any more; you cannot go in," and today as Moses stands yonder in the glory how glad he is that God had His way. David prayed for the child of Bathsheba, "Heal the child, and let him live." But God said, "No, I won't heal him; I am going to take him home," and David bowed his head at last and said, "He cannot come back to me, but I will go to him," and David's heart was drawn toward heaven in a way it would never have been otherwise, and how thankful he is today that God did not answer his prayer. Elijah

went out into the wilderness when an angry woman frightened him. The man who could stand before King Ahab ran away to the juniper tree when Jezebel was after him, and he flung himself down before God and said, "I am no better than my fathers." Did you think you were, Elijah? He found out that he was not, and then he said, "Let me die." How thankful he is today that God did not answer that prayer. Elijah is the only man between the flood and the cross of Christ who never died at all. He went to heaven without dying. And Paul prayed, "Remove the thorn from my flesh," and the Lord said, "I won't remove it, but I will give you grace to bear it."

Have you a thorn, some great trial, some infirmity, some distress, something that is just burdening your heart and it seems as though you will break under it? You have prayed and prayed, "O Lord, deliver me from this." It may not be the will of God to deliver you, but He says, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." When Paul heard that, he said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The weaker I am the better opportunity Christ has to manifest Himself in me.

And then in the concluding verse of this section he says, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." May God give each one of us to take that place of subjection to the will of God where we can glory in infirmities.

LECTURE 21

HELPING OR HINDERING CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

2 Corinthians 12:11–21

I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile. Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps? Again, think ye that we excuse

ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: and lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed. (vv. 11–21)

The church of God is the holiest thing there is on earth, and yet there are a great many imperfections in that church. It is absolutely the best thing in the world today. If you were suddenly to take the church of God out of this world, what a mixed, conglomerate mass of iniquity would be left behind! You can realize that better if you stop to consider what the church of God has meant throughout the centuries. People often debate the question as to whether the world is better or worse than it was nineteen hundred years ago. Some insist that the world is worse, and that it is constantly getting worse. They quote the Scripture, “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13). Others insist that the world is better, and they point to the millions of Christian people, to the kindness and the interest in the poor and needy that prevail in many lands where once the vilest cruelty existed. But, in my judgment, both are wrong.

The world is no worse than it was nineteen hundred years ago. When Scripture says that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse,” it is simply telling us what has always been true, and always will be true of people who turn away from God. As men give themselves up to evil, certainly they get worse and worse as time goes on. That was always so; it is so today. Wherever you find evil men, they grow worse and worse. But the world is not worse today than it was when our blessed Lord Jesus was here. The greatest crime that has ever been committed was committed nineteen hundred years ago in the murder of the Son of God. Now the world continues to condone that crime, and as long as it continues to reject the Lord Jesus Christ it will never get any better. Therefore the world is not getting any better. It is not improving. But, you say, think of the Christians, of the churches all over the land, of the kindness and interest in the needy that prevail in many places. Yes, we take all that into consideration, but the question is this, “Is the *world* getting any better?” If you want to find out if the world is getting any better, you must subtract the church. If you could imagine this scene with every Christian gone, you would have “the world,” and you

would find that world just as corrupt, just as vile, just as wicked as it was nineteen hundred years ago. It is true that this globe is a much more comfortable place on which to have a home than it was nineteen hundred years ago. We enjoy a great many inventions, and have benefited by a great many things that minister to human need and comfort that were unknown then, but these things do not change the hearts of men. Men are just as wicked with electricity, with radios, with streamline trains, with motorboats, with airplanes, as they were before these things were known.

In this world there is something very dear to the heart of the Son of God. He called it, "my church." When Peter made his great declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [the Rock that thou hast confessed] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:16–18). The Holy Spirit has likened that church to Christ's body, His bride—"Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25–26).

The church is looked at in two aspects. In the first place it includes all believers everywhere at any time since the day of Pentecost. Now, whether these people have intimate church relationship with others or not, they belong to "the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22–23). But the Scripture also contemplates *churches*. You read of the churches of Galatia, the churches of Judea, the seven churches of Asia, etc., and these local churches are groups of confessed believers. Not always are all of them real believers, but presumably, they all profess to be believers, and so gather together for worship, for praise, for prayer, and for Christian testimony. This has been so from the beginning. Those that "received [the] word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41–42). We need this fellowship, we need this outward expression of Christian testimony, and so God by His Spirit forms local churches in various places where His people gather together thus to worship Him. There are some who say, "I am a Christian and belong to the church, the body of Christ, and I do not need to be associated with any local body of Christians. If I could find one absolutely perfect, I would join it." But then, it would be spoiled after you got in, for you would be the first bad thing in it, because you would go in with that critical spirit of yours, and that would spoil the whole testimony. It

is never contemplated in Scripture that local churches will be perfect companies of believers. From the beginning you find a great many imperfect people in local assemblies, but that is no reason why they should be disbanded. Therefore, you and I as Christians are responsible to walk in fellowship with other Christians. They need us and we need them. Some people who find it very difficult to get along with others get a great blessing for putting up with them. The hardest thing, if endured for Christ's sake, will bring blessing. It drives us to our knees to self-examination, leads us to ask ourselves, "What is the matter with me that I find it so hard to please such absolutely good people?" We are all just poor sinners saved by grace, but someday we are going to be just like the Lord Jesus Christ, and as He is so patient with us, we can afford to be patient one with another.

We find from this epistle that there was a great deal in the early church that was far from satisfactory. We have seen the difficulties the apostle Paul had even with his own converts. He would go into a certain place and lead people to Christ, and it would not be long before they thought they knew more than he did, and some of them, in their own estimation, became so much holier than he that they no longer wanted to have fellowship with him!

As he comes to the last part of the portion of the epistle, in which he has attempted to justify his own ministry, Paul shows us that there are both helpers and hinderers in the church of God. You can settle it in your own mind as to which you are, whether a helper or a hinderer. You are one or the other. You are either helping the testimony, spreading the gospel, commending Christ to other people, or you are hindering, by leading people to question whether there is anything real in the salvation of which we speak.

Let us notice first of all how grace wrought in the apostle Paul. He did not like to speak of himself, but the Holy Spirit made him do so. For the fourth or fifth time he says that he is a fool as he speaks of himself, "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you." God had given him this mission and he could not think lightly of it. Because he had led them to Christ he should have been commended of them. It was like little children trying to tell a father what to do and how to behave. Not so very many months ago I was in a home and something was going on upstairs while I waited in the car. A young lady of about seventeen years of age came down the stairs, and said to me, "You must excuse me, I do get so angry. I have an awful job making father behave!" That is the spirit of the day, and these Corinthians were trying to regulate their father in Christ.

Paul now says that he has to tell them something of the mission entrusted to him, which was not given to any other man. He says, "For in nothing am I

behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." You have here a wonderful combination of the importance of the mission committed to him and of Christian humility. He would have been false to his commission had he failed to recognize the fact that he was indeed in nothing behind the very chiefest apostles. The Lord Jesus Christ had committed to him such a ministry as no other apostle had fully entered into, but he to whom this ministry was committed said, "Though I be nothing." In his first epistle to them he rebuked the Corinthians for making too much of leaders and saying, "I am of Paul; and I am of Apollos; and I am of Cephas," and says, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:5). But the minister is nothing, Christ is all, and so he sets the example of true Christian humility. One who would be a helper in the work of the Lord must be a humble man. God refuses to identify His name for long with those that walk in pride. "Those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan. 4:37). If we have not the mind of Christ, we will not be used of God as He would like to use us. Let us search our own hearts and see whether we are cherishing that unholy pride which goes before destruction. There is many a man of remarkable ability whom God has to put to one side because a proud, haughty spirit comes in continually to interfere with the work of the Lord. May God teach us to be lowly, and help us to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing" (Col. 1:10).

Notice in the third place, the devotedness of this man. In verse 12 we read, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." The miracles he wrought proved he was divinely approved and accredited. "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." He was out in the work of the Lord and he was unequaled as a teacher and a preacher. Did he set a price upon his ministry? Did he say, "I refuse to preach, to teach, unless you pay me a certain salary"? No, he said, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." And when he found there was a wrong spirit among them he decided that he would take nothing from them, and all the time he was ministering to them he had received his support from other churches who sent their offerings to him. These Corinthians did not understand it, and so said, "He cannot be a real apostle or he would be taking money for his services." But he says, "The very fact that I am here to serve you freely ought to be to you the evidence that I have no selfish motive." He was an unselfish man, a devoted

man, there was something so frank, so childlike, so wholehearted about him, that it should have commended him to their love and confidence. "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"—I am willing to lay myself out for you whether you think much of me or not, I am here to do you good. And yet they tried to see some hidden motive behind it all and said, "He is crafty, he is putting on this appearance of humility, he is pretending to be meek and lowly in order to have influence over us and exercise authority over us." "Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile!" Is he saying that he did this? No, he is quoting what they said about him, for they said, "He is deceitful, his apparent disinterestedness is just craft, and he is pretending to be so humble and lowly in order that he may hold us under his thumb." The apostle repudiates anything of the kind and says, "My preaching was hot with enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:4). "Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you?" He had sent Titus to receive their gift for the needy saints, and with him another to count the money, that there might be no misunderstanding. "Walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?"—showing that our entire service was absolutely unselfish.

Then notice, his own life was summed up in living for others, "Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." Although you and I are far from being apostles, yet we can all be characterized by the same spirit of humility, of devotedness to Christ, of unselfish service for others.

Now look at the contrast. See what has been manifested in these Corinthians as this evil spirit of fault-finding took hold of them. "I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." Let us face this passage honestly, and see whether we have fallen under the power of any of these unholy things. "Lest there be debates." What does that mean? It is what you so often see when two or three people get to fussing about this and that. What a childish spirit this is, and yet how it hurts the work of the Lord. And then in the second place, "envyings." How few people there are who can rejoice in what others are accomplishing, who can delight to see others honored and recognized. In the third place, "wrath," for envy cherished leads to wrath. And how easy it is to be censorious and bitter. That which begins in a small faultfinding way, if not judged, soon degenerates into positive ill-will toward others. And then, "strife." How often there is strife

between God's people. "Backbitings." You know the sister who comes to you and says, "Did you hear about Brother So-and-So?"

"No."

"Well, I don't know that I ought to tell you."

"Oh, yes, do."

"Well, it is really awful."

And just then Brother So-and-So walks in the door, and the sisters say, "Why, how do you do? We were just talking of you. Speak of an angel, and he's sure to appear!" It isn't always the sisters who do this. It is often the brothers too.

Miserable hypocrites! Backbiting, saying things behind the back that they would never dare to say to the face! If every time someone said something evil or unkind behind another's back the other person would say, "Is that so? Well, let us go and talk to him about it," this thing would soon be stopped. Then, "whisperings." A meeting breaks up, and a little group over here is whispering and fault-finding, and there a group is together whispering and complaining. Judge whether you have ever been guilty of anything of the kind. "Swellings." I do not recall what that Greek word is, but this word always makes me think of a bull-frog sitting on a log puffing, puffing, puffing. Throw a stone at him, and he goes down to a very small size. And then, "tumults." How many churches have been wrecked when at last these evil things have resulted in tumults, internal troubles that divide and destroy the work. We can be very grateful to God that through the Holy Spirit He has indicated these dangerous things so that we can avoid them and be helpers instead of hinderers.

Why did they find fault with the apostle Paul? He had to be very strict about some wicked things that had been tolerated by some people in the church at Corinth, and he says, "Lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed." Some of these people had fallen into unclean and unholy things, and in order to cover up their own pollution they were finding fault with Christ's servant because of his faithfulness. That is always the effect of sin. Hidden sin in the life will result in unfair criticism of the servants of God who stand against things of that kind and seek to lift up a standard of holiness and purity.

And so, may we face the question, Am I a hinderer or a helper? God has committed to His church the business of making known the gospel of His grace to a lost world. I want by His help to carry it on and not to hinder. May God impress on our hearts the importance of devoted living for the blessing of others.

LECTURE 22

CRUCIFIED THROUGH WEAKNESS

2 Corinthians 13:1–14

This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection. Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power

which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction. Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with an holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. (vv. 1-14)

This last chapter may really be divided into two parts, and yet they are so intimately connected that I want to discuss it all at the same time. The apostle, you remember, had told these Corinthians on two previous occasions that he had been arranging to come to see them, but certain circumstances hindered. Just what forms these circumstances took we are not told, but he was unable to come; and because he had not kept his partial promise there were those who accused him of lightness, of levity, in promising things which he did not do. Others declared there was a very good reason why he did not come. They said, "He has charged us with certain things, which he is taking for granted are true, and he does not dare to come and face us about them." And he said, "I am coming, the third time I am coming, and when I come, in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word will be established. I have written you beforehand of behavior contrary to Christian principles. All I have heard will be fully substantiated, and I hope when I get there I will find you really repentant of these evil things and not condoning them." "I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare." He did not like to come. He says on one occasion, "To spare you I refrained from coming," but he could not put it off; he would come to them and deal with those things face to face. Unholiness is incompatible with the testimony of the church of God, which is the temple of the living God. "Holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, for ever" (Ps. 93:5). And if those who are linked up with others in Christian fellowship are living unholy lives, they should be put away from the assembly, but if they repent they are to be restored to full communion.

In replying again to the suggestion that Paul was not a real apostle, he says, "If you seek a proof of Christ living in me, examine yourselves." Now if you take this fifth verse out of its connection you lose the meaning of it. Many people take it as though he meant that we are to examine ourselves to see if we are real Christians, but that is not what Paul was saying. They questioned his apostleship, whether the Spirit of God was in his ministry. If you will look at everything after "speaking in me," verse 3 down through verse 4, as parenthetical, then you get

his exact meaning. "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, . . . examine yourselves." In other words, he is saying, "Are you Christians? How did you become Christians? Was it not through my ministry? Well, then God was working in me. If you are hypocrites, if you are not real Christians, then Christ did not work in me. If you are real Christians, if you have the assurance that you are the children of God, you received that as a result of the testimony that I brought to you at Corinth. Therefore you ought to be the last people in the world to question whether Christ wrought through me."

I suppose we are all indebted to some servant of Christ for our present knowledge of the truth. If we are not living in a godly manner, it is reflecting discredit on the one who brought us to Christ. If we want to bring credit to our fathers and mothers in Christ, then we should live to the glory of God. There are certain things that the world looks upon as its own, and I am here to represent my Father, and I do not want to bring discredit on my Father's name. The Book says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15–17). Oh, I wish that we as Christians might ever keep that in mind! We are here in the world to represent our Father and to represent our Savior, and men can but get their conception of God and of Christ, our blessed Lord, through us. We may well examine ourselves, therefore, and see if we are so behaving as to bring glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us now go back and look at the parenthesis. Paul turns aside and exclaims concerning his ministry, "Which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you." This is the parenthesis. Now notice how solemnly he brings before us the humiliation Christ endured for our redemption, which we are in a measure called to share. "He was crucified through weakness." What does that mean? Does it mean He was so weak in Himself that He was unable to resist His foes? Or was He simply the victim of circumstances? Oh, no. The preposition translated "through" here is generally rendered "in." He was crucified in weakness, but He liveth again in the power of God. It simply means this: He chose to become a Man for our redemption. He chose to be made "a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." He who was higher than the highest "did not count it [equality with God] a thing to be grasped," but He emptied Himself of

the glory He had before the world was, and "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, and [such a death, that] of the cross." In this sense He was crucified through weakness. As excarnate God He could never have died for our sin. But He chose to become incarnate. He chose to become a man, and to be subject to hunger and thirst and weariness and every sinless infirmity of mankind, and He chose not to resist His foes. He allowed Himself to be spat upon, to be beaten, to be crowned with thorns. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." He chose to be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." It was His own desire thus to give Himself a ransom for all, and so we read in his first epistle: "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:21-24). Now listen: "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25). Think of these two expressions: First, "The foolishness of God"; what does it mean? It is really, "the simplicity of God." It means that God's wondrous plan of redemption through the cross is foolishness to the philosopher, the man of this world, but the Scripture says, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." And, second, "The weakness of God"; what does that imply? God becoming Man, God submitting to the agony and shame of the cross, God in Christ bleeding, suffering, dying for our redemption. "The weakness of God is stronger than men." God could do through the cross what He never could do apart from the cross. Oh, the miracles that have been wrought through the cross all down the centuries! Do you know of anything else that can change the heart of a hard, cruel and godless man, transform him and make a new creature of him?

A minister tells how on one occasion in New Guinea, where perhaps less than a score of years before the heathen were utterly wrapped in darkness, through a testimony carried on there by faithful witnesses the people were gathered reverently at the table of the Lord, and here sat a missionary of the cross. Beside him sat an elder of the native church. The minister recognized in this elder the son of a man who had eaten the missionary father of the son sitting there. The son of the martyred missionary and the son of the man who had killed him, were both remembering the Lord Jesus as the Savior of mankind. Do you know of anything that can bind hearts together like this?

You recall the story of Kayarnak, the first convert of the Moravian missionaries in Greenland. When they went to that country and found the people so steeped in iniquity, they said, "They will never understand the gospel. These people are drunkards, gluttons, they are adulterers, they are living the vilest of lives. They won't understand the grace of God, they will take it as a license for sin." So the Moravian missionaries drilled into the hearts and minds of that people God's holy law. They said they had to do it to create a conscience in the Eskimo. But the results were nil. No man had ever sought out a missionary for conference about his soul. They listened to the messages and went back and lived their wicked lives again. And then Hans Egede came, his heart burning with love for that people. He had left wealth and honor to sacrifice himself for those unspeakably vile Greenlanders. It was announced he would speak in a certain neighborhood on a Lord's Day. They crowded into a small lodge holding two hundred to three hundred people. It was a poor affair, built up from pieces of old wrecked ships. There they sat. Hans Egede stood up and preached and, for the first time in the history of Greenland, told the story of the cross. Tenderly, lovingly, with a heart that had itself been broken by the power of the cross, he told of the One who had suffered and bled for the redemption of sinners. It took an hour or two to tell his story, and when he finished Kayarnak, a young chief, who had been listening eagerly as the gospel was proclaimed, sprang forward and cried, "Missionaries, why did you not tell us this before? You have been with us a year, and you never told us before. You told us of a God who created a world, and it did not make us hate our sin. You told us of a God who gave His holy law. We learned the Ten Commandments, and we went out and got drunk again, but today you have told us how our sins broke the heart of God and He came to redeem us from our sins. Missionary, Kayarnak cannot sin against love like that. From now on Kayarnak will be a Christian." And Kayarnak became the outstanding Christian testimony for years in Greenland. "The weakness of God is stronger than men." We have sometimes tried to reason people into salvation, forgetting that our commission is to preach His Word, to preach Christ. Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of God." He was crucified in weakness. Let us never forget that. My sin put Him there; your sin put Him there. What do I mean? You say, "We are Christians; do you mean the sins we committed before we were saved?" I mean the sin that you committed last night, that sin nailed the Son of God to the cross; that sin that you have been meditating today, that sin put God on the cross. All the sins that you and I have committed, of thought, of word and of deed, God saw them all, and for all of them the Son of God suffered, and if you deliberately walk out and

commit sin you are sinning against the cross of Christ. You cannot live like the world without trampling on the Son of God. You cannot go on in things that His Book condemns without deliberately piercing, as it were, the side of the Son of God afresh.

And yet it is not a dead Christ that we serve. He lives by the power of God and He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." We have a living Christ and He desires us to walk in His steps, to live in separation from the world. His people are not of the world, and that is one reason why they will never be understood by the world. You cannot walk as He walked and please the world; it is impossible. He says, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." Oh, the absurdity—shall I say—or the fanaticism of imagining that you can be a consistent Christian and yet live like the world. It is folly of the worst kind. If you are saved through the Christ that the world rejected, you take Him as your Lord and seek to live the kind of life He lived. Do you want to know what it was? Turn back to the four Gospels and see.

"Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates." It is a dishonest thing to profess to serve Christ and not yield your life to His control. If those Corinthians were really Christians, then the gospel that Paul preached had been believed, and if believed it would show through the life. The truth proclaimed goes on from victory to victory. Note the unselfishness of this man Paul: "We are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong." That is not the world's way. We should be willing to take the lowest place. You see, Paul never sees the saints as perfect in the body. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may [lay hold of] that for which also I [have been laid hold of by] Christ Jesus." But he is seeking the perfection of the saints, going on to this perfect, fully-developed Christian character. That only comes as we walk in fellowship with Christ.

"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness." He does not want to say some stern things that very much needed to be said. "According to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

And then comes the conclusion of his epistle: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be [perfect]." I desire your perfection. Literally, be perfected, by continual growth. "Be of good comfort." Cheer up. "Be of one mind, live in peace." I think one thing that brings great distress and hindrance to the work of the Lord is when believers speak so unkindly of others. Let us learn to speak well of our brethren in Christ. "Live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

“Greet one another with an holy kiss.” Do not put the emphasis on “kiss.” He is not saying that you are to greet people with a kiss. “Greet one another with a *holy* kiss.” That is where you put the emphasis. Greet one another with a holy handshake. It is a very unholy handshake if on meeting a brother we say, “Well, my dear brother, how do you do?” and then turn away and say, “I have no use for him.” That is a very unholy handshake. Judas kissed the Lord and it was an unholy kiss; it was a kiss of hypocrisy. “All the saints salute you.”

And now we have that well-known benediction that has been heard ten million times since Paul wrote it: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

In these words we have epitomized for us the outstanding doctrines of the Christian faith. The truth of the Holy Trinity is here presented as definitely as in Matthew 28:19. The grace of the Son, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit include every blessing that is ours through the infinite mercy of God: grace to cover all our sins, and to strengthen us for every conflict; love to cheer and sustain our hearts in every trial; and a hallowed fellowship that gives us to enter into and enjoy our rich inheritance in Christ!

An Ironside Expository Commentary



1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS

"If lips and life do not agree, the testimony will not amount to much." The young Harry Ironside knew the truth of his own statement all too well. He began leading a Sunday school class in Los Angeles at age eleven, but stopped when he realized his own need to know God more intimately. Converted at age thirteen, Ironside began to preach shortly thereafter and continued to pursue God's calling for the rest of his life.

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